

# Lilith

the  
independent  
Jewish  
women's  
magazine

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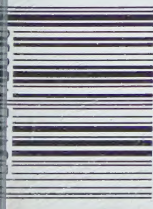
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# Lilith

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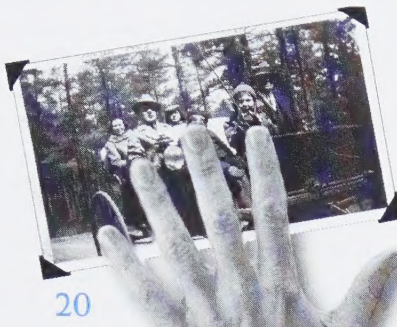
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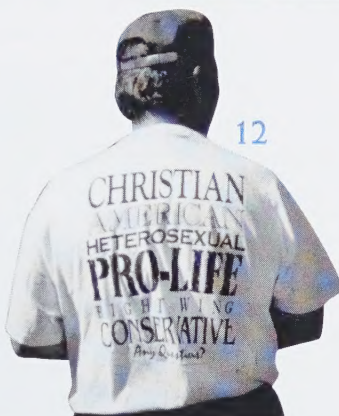
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Cover painting is taken from *Multicultural Celebrations: The Paintings of Betty La Duke, 1972-1992*, by Gloria Feman Orenstein (Pomegranate Books, 1993). La Duke, a painter, has done extensive research in non-Western countries resulting in 5 books on women, art and social change. Her 1997 publications by Africa World Press are *Africa: Women's Art*, *Women's Lives and Women Against Hunger: A Sketchbook Journey*. La Duke, professor emeritus of art at Southern Oregon University, can be contacted at 610 Long Way, Ashland, OR 97520.

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**L**earning to live in the moment is no easy feat for Jews. While much of Jewish ritual and liturgy is supposed to help us stay put in the moment, keeping us focused—prayers for arising, blessings over different foods at mealtime, activities to be performed at specified times—we Jews are also specialists at anticipation. At Purim time we're smelling Pesach in the air. In August shofar blasts sound in synagogue a full month in advance of Rosh Hashanah. Appreciating the present and not living for some deferred gratification in the future is hard to do. While Jewish practice is rooted in quotidian reality, steeped in time, most of us are on the path to some goal far off from today. The women we all know are asking, When do I graduate? How long will it take me to finish my PhD thesis? When will I have grandchildren?

I'm grappling with these ideas about appreciation of the moment (before it's too late) for reasons both political and personal. The personal (let's get this out of the way first) is a household move that has tried to teach me to appreciate where I am while I'm there (if you know what I mean), instead of grumbling about the imperfections of the present. And then there are all the conversations I've had recently with girls and young women of all ages.

As you know when you scan the masthead, LILITH has wonderful interns each season who come to us either during their college years or just after graduation. The worlds of these bright, energetic, accomplished women are extraordinarily future-oriented. Got into college? You're already worrying about what kinds of programs you need to apply to for the summer after your first year. Just graduated and in your first job? Now comes the decision-making about whether you'll apply to graduate school this season or next.

The struggle for perfection—both of the life and of the art—engages even young girls. For them, including even precocious Jewish girls of nine or 10, the battleground is the body. "I'm so fat, you're so thin; you're so thin, I'm so fat." You know the litany. One survey of

young girls, which echoes the findings of research on adults, shows that girls are more afraid of becoming fat than they are of cancer, or losing their parents. By the time they reach high school, many young women entertain suicidal thoughts because they are unhappy with their bodies as they are.

Although I have written about this subject here before—and LILITH has published some remarkable articles on Jewish women and body image—I'm taking it up again now because it seems clear that body image is possibly the most crucial element of self-esteem—and even identity—for girls and young women. High-achieving women (among whose ranks Jewish women are heavily represented) are especially at risk for investing themselves in thinness and the perfectibility of their body shapes. Physical contours may in reality be genetically determined, but how women feel about their bodies has a great deal to do with ethnicity, social class, race, parental attitudes, gender roles and more.

Because we know that so much of what goes on in family life revolves around the expectations of parents, youth groups such as NFTY, B'nai Brith Girls, USY, Habonim and all the rest have a terrific opportunity—as do women's Rosh Hodesh groups—to talk about body image and self esteem in a safe (and Jewish) context. Jewish groups can provide a reliable counterweight (no pun intended) to the thinness preoccupations of society in general and to the perfectionistic impulses so many Jewish parents have toward their offspring, their daughters in particular.

Eating disorders sap the energies of so many capable Jewish women that we need to look creatively at our tradition, to try to figure out how a religion and a culture rooted both in everyday attentiveness and committed to the future orientation of *tikkun olam*—repair of the world—can help pull girls out of the fight for a skinny future and into an understanding of how lovely they are today.

*Susan*  
—Susan Weidman Schneider

# Lilith



*In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple... The Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said, "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."*

(from *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 23a-b)

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## What's In a Bra? All of Jewish Women's History, Perhaps

It all started for artist Stephanie Sakellaris with a dream of *tefillin*. They weren't hard like the wooden boxes and leather straps men have traditionally worn, but soft, "like food," she says. And when she awoke, "I saw my black bra there and knew what I had to do."

What she had to do, it turned out, was to create *tefillin*, made of that black bra, sewed up, stuffed with rice and strapped on her head. "It made binding something to the body a very erotic and personal act," she recalls.

Then she made 179 more of them, to an even *Chai*, and populated the women's gallery of a deserted and ramshackled former synagogue in lower Manhattan. The ladies in the balcony, the central players in an exhibit that hung this fall at the Orensanz Center for the Arts, which now occupies that synagogue, became

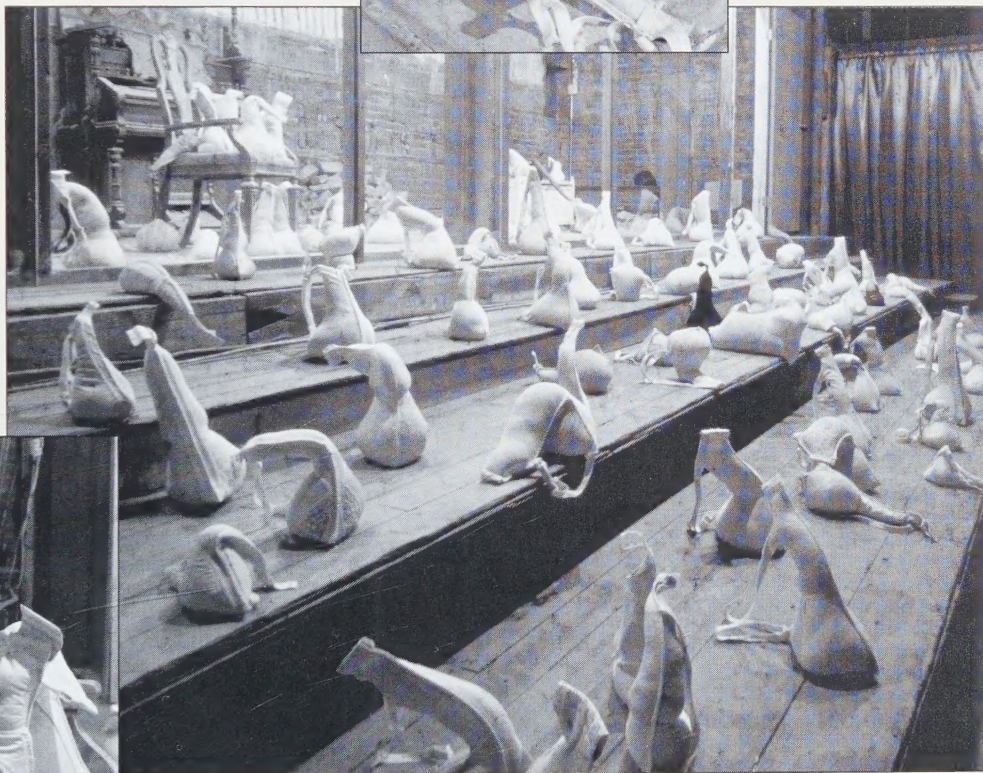
ed women go to *shul*, bleed, make love and piece together history. They do not have a true religious community that is theirs."

Sakellaris does not hold fast to logical connections. In fact she calls her show



ed to use bras that had been lived with and worn. They have *such* different personalities."

Some visitors, wandering through the congregation of women forms, were confused. Others darted about with excitement. "These are bras! These are bras! These are bras!" they exclaimed. To



transformed into vibrant beings who emanated themes of femininity, Jewish history, Jewish law, sexuality and even the Holocaust.

"In a room deep in the city," Sakellaris wrote in a fantastical piece of explanation, "women congregate to make sense of the sexual brutality of the concentration camps. . . . These disjoint-

"*Hukkim*," a word that refers to aspects of Jewish law that are considered to have no rational explanation. Her figures, which for "*Hukkim*" sat in the women's gallery of a one-time Reform-cum-Orthodox 1849 synagogue, carry the weight of Jewish women's history like the subconscious, overlapping meaning and reference. They are both humble and exposed, naive and sexy, flaunting modernity in the face of tradition.

Sakellaris speaks of them with love. "I made 180 of these figures, these girls, like girlfriends, to whom I might tell secrets I wouldn't tell a man. I only want-

Sakellaris, however, they are fragile friends. "To me they are just *so* vulnerable. Some of them got stepped on during the show and I was very upset."

Now that the women in the gallery have gone home, they sit in a bin in Sakellaris' studio, waiting for her to figure out their next role. "I really had gotten used to working with them as a congregation," she smiles. "Now, I've begun hanging some on my walls. You should see two of them hanging side by side. They've got a different gravity that way."

—Sarah Blustain

## Were Yemenite Babies Really Stolen?

It has been called Israel's most enduring mystery—the fate of some 1,500 babies born to Yemenite Jews who disappeared shortly after the nation's founding. Some claimed they had died. Others said they were stolen and sold to Ashkenazic parents. Then a few months ago, a woman living in California announced that she had been one of those children sold and that she had found her mother after more than 45 years. Her trip to Israel for the reunion kicked off a firestorm of press coverage, but the mystery was far from solved.



Members of the Yemenite Jewish community in Israel and the United States have been claiming for four decades that hundreds of Yemenite babies were sold for adoption in the chaos of the nation's early days. Some 45,000 Yemenite Jews were airlifted to Israel in "Operation Margic Carpet" from 1948 to 1950 and placed in squalid refugee camps. Many were separated from their children, and some parents say they were told their children had died from malnutrition, malaria or other diseases. Eighteen years later, when draft notices for these children started arriving, these parents clamored for answers and the first of three government commissions was created.

The third of these commissions is currently meeting, interviewing witnesses about what happened in those early years. Yemenites, however, continue to claim a coverup. Babies were sold by doctors, nurses and relief officials, they say, because they believed

dark-skinned Yemenite Jews had a better chance of becoming productive Zionists if they were adopted by Ashkenazic Jews.

Tzila Levine, a housewife and former Sunday school teacher living in America the past 18 years, always had wondered where she came from. She was the only dark-skinned girl where she grew up near Haifa, and her Polish parents told her they adopted her from a doctor's house filled with babies. Adoption officials in Israel told her they had no records of her at all. She virtually gave up on finding her origins until she saw Sampson Giat, head of the Yemenite Jewish Federation of America, talking about the mystery on cable television.

She called Giat and a few months later went to Israel. A lawyer hired by Giat called a press conference, timed to

saturated with news about bus bombings and political machinations.

When she testified before the commission, however, Levine was met with doubt. Investigators asked for new tests. "They are the same government who has been lying all these years," Levine said. "I didn't expect them to say, 'Oh, we are glad you found your mother. *Mazel tov.*'" But the women did agree to additional tests performed by the state forensic lab.

The women were united and spending time together when the new results came in. Leaked to the Israeli press before they were given to the families, they showed no relationship between the two. The women cried foul, threatened to sue over the public release of the results. The coverup allegations intensified.

The government, yet to issue a final

**Left: Margalit Umassi and Tzila Levine**

**Below: Empty grave. Yemenite activists believe it was used to fake a baby's death.**



hearings by the third government commission. Her face was splashed throughout the Israeli media. A few days later, a 67-year-old woman bearing a startling resemblance, showed up at the lawyer's office. Margalit Umassi was there to claim her daughter.

DNA tests were ordered and indicated a 99.9% likelihood the women were mother and daughter. The two women became the biggest story in a country

report, stood by the tests. But outside DNA experts said it's impossible to dismiss the first findings. "There is no question in our minds this is my mother," an angry Levine told the *Sacramento Bee*, which covered the saga of its community member. "This is a war we are in with the government and it is a war we will win."

—Gary Delsohn

## Challenging the Market With Jewish Art

**P**enny Liebman's two-year-old Contemporary Art gallery is doing exactly what its proprietor has been warned against by other gallery owners. "I was told not to go with my passion when showcasing art. Go with what will sell," Liebman recalls. "By being honest and true to myself," Liebman says, she has found herself displaying painting and sculpture from young, emerging Jewish artists in her studio apartment-turned-gallery on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

An art historian and enthusiast, Liebman has created a forum to show art focusing on Jewish heritage, experience, history and "themes of otherness." Liebman has showcased the works of Barbara Rose Haum, who utilizes the influences of psychoanalytic theory,



Liebman in front of work by Aharon Gluska, displayed in her gallery.

feminist thought, and theology within her sculpture. In her series entitled *Separation Anxiety*, Haum raises ideas about mother/child separation, and their reference to laws of impurity and religious ritual.

"It is difficult to find collectors who come specifically to find Jewish content. But because the art I am showing is so exceptional," Liebman adds, "and because collectors are finding that Jewish themes can be more avant-garde and mainstream than people think, my gallery has been successful."

Offering four shows per year, Liebman's gallery also combines fine art with literature in a Jewish American Fiction Reading Series, which she hopes will create an environment in which new and emerging artists can interact.

—Lori Sokol

## feminist scholarship.new

**From time to time, LILITH lets readers know of recent academic work of particular interest to Jewish feminists.**

**Gendering Magic in Late Antique Judaism**, by Melissa Aubin, Duke University, PhD. dissertation.

Jewish women have been portrayed throughout history as mothers, queens, princesses, teachers, helpmates and footstools. In rabbinic Judaism they were also feared for their powers of sorcery. These were girls like the estimable Rabbi Nachman's daughters, who apparently stirred boiling cauldrons with their bare hands and didn't get burned (*BT Gittin 45a*).

According to Melissa Aubin, by linking femaleness with irreligious and polytheistic magic, the rabbis ensured that women would never have positions of power in rabbinic Judaism. Aubin reveals that when whispered incanta-

tions and spells over spices were conducted by "others" (women), they were denounced as magic; when performed by the rabbis—a practice she documents—they were considered simply part of the trappings of rabbinic Judaism.

**'From Where Have You Come and Where Are You Going': Hagar and Sarah Encounter God**, by Toba Spitzer, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, class essay.

Of all of the divine-human encounters in the Bible, only five occur between a woman and God. In her prize-winning essay, Toba Spitzer looks at Hagar's two encounters and Sarah's single one (a reprimand) and concludes that the Torah acknowledges that the place in which women find themselves impacts their communications with God. Twice Hagar was thrust out of her home and left to die in the desert, where she received Divine comfort. Sarah was rebuked by God as she waited on the threshold of her tent, eavesdropping on Abraham discussing her future with the Divine, laughing to herself over the suggestion that in her old age she might bear a child. It is in those in-between places outside our comfort zones,

Spitzer argues, where biblical characters (and all of us) have the greatest potential for an encounter with the Divine.

**The Manifestation of Shekhinah in Jewish Women's Ritual: An Exploration of Tkhines and Women's Haggadot**, by Paulana Layman, Concordia University, MA thesis.

Time was the Shekhinah and the prayers She inspired played a central role in the lives of Jewish women. Though Shekhinah has been revived in recent years, Her staying power had not been impressive. Looking at the function of Shekhinah in Medieval Yiddish female prayers, *tkhines*, Paulana Layman offers a challenge to the current revival, particularly in feminist Passover *haggadot*. Just as *tkhines* were recited by women in the privacy of their homes, outside the structures of mainstream Judaism, similarly today, Layman argues, feminist *haggadot* are mainly used at women's—and not family—*seders*. In our day, she asks, will Shekhinah be brought into normative Judaism, or will She remain part of a marginal "woman's culture"?

—Susan Sapiro

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## The Dreaming Youth of Luboml

**F**rom the familiar babushka to the women of the fire brigade, the photographs in "Remembering Luboml: Images of a Jewish Community" recall one Polish community that spanned the spectrum of tradition and assimilation.

Only 51 of the 4,000 Jews who lived in Luboml, Poland, at the time



"Young Women with Bicycles" (note the trousers), 1930s.



Miriam Ziegelbaum Ingber says good-bye to Leah Wolwushes before departing for Palestine, 1937.

of the Holocaust survived. But Aaron Ziegelman, who fled the country in 1938, was determined to show the world the diversity of Jewish life in his home town and three years ago undertook the Luboml Exhibition Project to rescue the photos and artifacts of Luboml, known by its Jews as Libivne.

"Libivne and its youth—a dreaming youth, a thinking youth—some of whom

had faith in the Messiah the son of David, and some who had faith in Marx and Engels; others yet in Herzl and a return to Zion," recalls one Libivner woman, Chane Kroyt Achtman, in wall text about the city's Jewish past.

The exhibit is on display at the Yeshiva University's Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, in New York City, through Jan. 26. To bring "Remembering Luboml: Images of a Jewish Community" to your community, contact project director Jill Vexler at the Luboml Exhibition Project, 212-807-7241.

### Part-time position in Women's Studies, Barnard College.

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## Love. Marriage. Only Connect. . .

**T**wentysomething sheltered Hasidic girl falls in love with confused non-Jew, despite her father's opposition. ("Nick & Rachel" an urban romance by New Yorker Zalisa Rabin.) • Thirtysomething assimilated Jewish filmmaker documents attraction to Lubavitch for once assimilated women. ("The Return of Sarah's Daughters" by Californian Marcia Jarmel.) • Fiftysomething Argentinean Jewish woman trains a non-Jewish man to pose as her Jewish fiancé, and falls in love with him in the process. ("Autumn Sun," a feature starring two of Argentina's top actors, directed by Eduardo Mignogna.)

We're talking about some of the brightest films at the 17th Annual San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, which included a handful of compelling love stories and one equally compelling documentary: "The Return of Sarah's Daughters," by Marcia Jarmel, about Lubavitch's appeal, examined through a feminist filter.

"Sarah's Daughters," which premiered at the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival this year shortly after winning the Judah Magnes Museum Video Competition, traces the religious quests of two 30-something women along with the ongoing theological struggles of the 38-year-old filmmaker.

Jarmel, a feminist drawn to the Orthodox community, is intrigued by bright, well-educated feminists finding a place in the Hasidic world, but she's not buying the program. She follows the Lubavitch and post-Lubavitch search of Myriam, who is unable to abandon her lesbian identity. Myriam describes being told by a rabbi, "You're a tragic figure. After the Holocaust, it's important to marry and have kids. Have a [lesbian] lover on the side." She says she "never found that the Orthodox or gay-lesbian community filled my needs. If you didn't conform, you couldn't belong." She seems to have resolved her

search as a Reconstructionist rabbinical student with a lesbian partner who is now ordained.

Rus (Ashkenazic for "Ruth") is the more intriguing searcher. A big, bright, high-energy social worker, she embraced Hasidic Judaism in college the moment she stepped across the threshold of a Hasidic home for

**Myriam Klotz and Rus Shatkin dance at Rus's wedding reception in the Hasidic community of Crown Heights, Brooklyn, in "The Return of Sarah's Daughters."**



**Rus and Avrom Burdman check their lettuce to make sure it's insect-free and kosher in "The Return of Sarah's Daughters."**

Shabbos. The photo of the Lubavitcher Rebbe is ever-present, looking over Rus's shoulder. Her family in Buffalo, who still call her Darcy, are troubled that she won't attend the family *bar mitzvahs*, but her father concludes that people like his daughter will preserve Judaism for the future.

At the close of the film, Jarmel raises the question, "Now that I have a child, the search is more pressing. What will I pass on?"

The question hangs heavily for Rus.

Since the completion of "Sarah's Daughters," Rus has divorced after three-plus years of marriage, and is engaged to remarry this spring. She has yet to produce a child. Rus's father may applaud her observance, but in the most Orthodox of communities, women's primary role remains preserving Judaism through their children. For the "barren" woman, life in this highly traditional world can be as wretched as it was in biblical times.

Hopefully, Rus will be spared this fate, but it's a concern that a sensitive filmmaker like Jarmel just might consider taking on.

—Amy Stone

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## A GIFT TO ANNE

Your review of Livia Bitton-Jackson's book, *I have Lived a Thousand Years: Growing Up in the Holocaust*, prompts me to write this letter. I was born five years before Anne Frank and I am now 71. Many times in my life, I said to myself, "Look at what Anne Frank could have accomplished if she had been given a chance to live." She has been an inspiration to me—as a proto-feminist, a Jew, and a person of amazing tolerance who looked for the good in all people.

After a year of study together with a group of six other women, I just became a *bat mitzvah* at age 70 for both Anne and myself. I read a poem dedicated to Anne Frank and there was not a dry eye in the synagogue.

Dr. Ann Moliver Ruben  
Miami Lakes, FL

## BABYING WOMEN

Why do you (like so many other women's magazines) equate women with children? It's okay to write about women and the effect of children on their lives, but "In the Children's Library" (Fall 1997)? What men's magazine has articles for children? I expected LILITH to be a magazine about Jewish women!

E. Frankel  
Hannawa Falls, NY

## SIMCHA-DANCING

My daughter's recent wedding was one of my most joyous and memorable *simchas*. Because she wanted her wedding to reflect her traditional Jewish values, she invited her female friends and family to a shower that would help to enhance the *simcha* for all. She wanted us to learn "*simcha*-dancing," so we would be comfortable dancing at the

wedding and could create an atmosphere of joy.

Some of my daughter's friends had never attended a traditional Jewish wedding and for them the introduction to what would be happening at the reception provided more comfortable access. The same held true for my daughter's new family.

Not only was the shower a great success—the energy that it raised continued for the next three weeks. The 50 women who gathered knew each other, experienced a camaraderie and looked forward to dancing together at the wedding. I highly recommend adding this to your list of ideas for Jewish bridal showers [Summer 1997].

Judith Stern Peck  
New York, NY

## "CLEAN" CLOTHES

I recently read "You Are What You Wear," by Sarah Wildman [Summer 1997] and thought it might interest you to know of a campaign that has been going on for over a year now. The "Clean Clothes Campaign" has been endorsed by local chapters of the NAACP and NOW, and has worked with UNITE.

Our first goal is to build a community consensus, articulated in a City Council resolution, that sweatshop apparel on our store shelves is not acceptable. Our second goal is to enable retailers to participate in this effort, gradually increasing their inventory of "clean" clothes.

For more information, contact: Bjorn Skorpen Claeson, PICA (Peace through Interamerican Community Action), 128 Maine Street, Bangor, Me 04401 (207) 947-4203; pical@hamtel.tds.net

Jordan Silverman  
Burlington, VT

## BODY SLAM

One might think from ads in LILITH that The Body Shop is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising women's [consciousness]. In truth, the company is more than anything a brilliant marketer.

I have been aware of The Body Shop because of their involvement in Nepalese handmade paper, a subject I have researched for years, and because they gave an award to an "eco-friendly" housing development in my area. Had the housing been built, it would have threatened a sensitive fjord system. Secondly, the PR for their Nepalese products has been misleading to enhance their political correctness. Finding them insinuating themselves into LILITH with "feminist" messages feels like an assault.

LILITH needs advertising dollars. The Body Shop needs to sell cosmetics. Let The Body Shop put in ads which are straight. Let LILITH take care of its own journalistic content. The ads blur this line and that is their intention. Let's have a few boundaries.

Dorothy Field  
Cobble Hill, British Columbia

## URBAN LATENCY

Your article in the Fall issue, "Jewish Latency," explored reasons young people often skip out on any form of Jewish involvement. However, two critical components were missing from the analysis—urban activism and questions of God.

Since moving to Philadelphia ten years ago, I have been searching for Jewish involvement that addresses my own core values of social service contributions. For me, being Jewish means living and working in the city and paying attention to the needs of its residents. Yet every

Jewish organization I've explored seems to focus on the suburbs and on once-a-year efforts to help the inner-city homeless.

As for questions of God, several years ago I took a class called "Jewish, Alive and American," through the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Our teacher did not want to talk about a definition of God or even her approach to thinking about God. How can you be an observant Jew, say the prayers, observe the holidays, if you don't know who or what God is and no one wants to talk about it?

Elizabeth Levine  
Philadelphia, PA

## A CONVERT'S TRIALS

Re: "Jewish Latency": I am a 25-year-old Jewish (convert) mother in a life-partnership with a non-Jewish man. I have gone "synagogue shopping" for several years and found that members of the congregations have often turned a cold shoulder to me because of my age, relationship with a non-Jew, my economic status, the fact that I am a convert or a combination of factors. I'd like to appeal to your readership to reach out to Jews like myself, struggling to find communities in which we can fully participate without fear or shame for our lifestyles and loved-ones.

Dorian D. Eder  
Minneapolis, MN

*Editor's Note: In response to "Jewish Latency" in the Fall issue of LILITH, we received numerous queries about statistics on Jews and college education. We refer readers to the "Hillel Guide to Jewish Life on Campus, 1996 Edition" edited by Ruth Fredman Cernea and published by The Princeton Review.*

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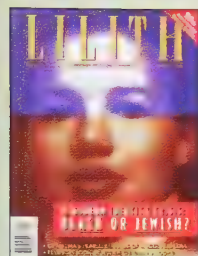
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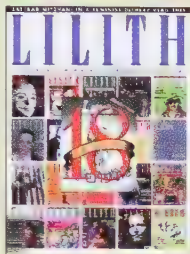
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- Lesbian Wedding: Reconciliations Under an Unusual Chuppah
- Jewish Feminist Politicians Tell What Shaped Them



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- Etty Hillesum: From Amsterdam to Auschwitz



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- Making Space Sacred
- Fiction: Three Special Stories About Love & Loss—and Men Who Inspire Both
- Medieval Women Had to Choose: Sex or Scholarship?



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- INmarriage: The New Minority—Jews Who Choose Jews!
- Counselor Alert! Amazing Programming for Summer Camp
- Jewish Women's Faces around the World: Photographs by Joan Roth



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- Women's Mideast Peace Efforts
- Our Radical Jewish Foremothers and How They Changed America



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- A New Jewish Population Statistic: Single Mothers—by Choice!
- Abortion—Fiction, Fact and Political Bedfellows
- Teen Girl Angst in the 1950's, 60's, 80's and Today



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- Feminist Philanthropy: Women Changing the World with Their Dollars
- Goddess Cults and Jewish Women
- Palestinian Women Who Are Making Peace



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- My Children Are Disappeared—An Argentine Mother's Nightmare
- A Woman Rabbi Reclaims Mikveh



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- Gender-Bending in Yiddish Film
- The Current Explosion of Jewish Women's Music
- A New Blessing for Your Wedding



## Spring 1993 (#39)

- Gentiles and Jews at the Hop: Why High School Reunions Trigger Such a Tingle
- Out of Africa: An Ethiopian Jewish Woman's Exodus
- Gender Politics at Summer Camp



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- Breaking the Male Monopoly of Jewish Community Leadership
- The First Conservative Woman Rabbi

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# Is Abortion Murder?

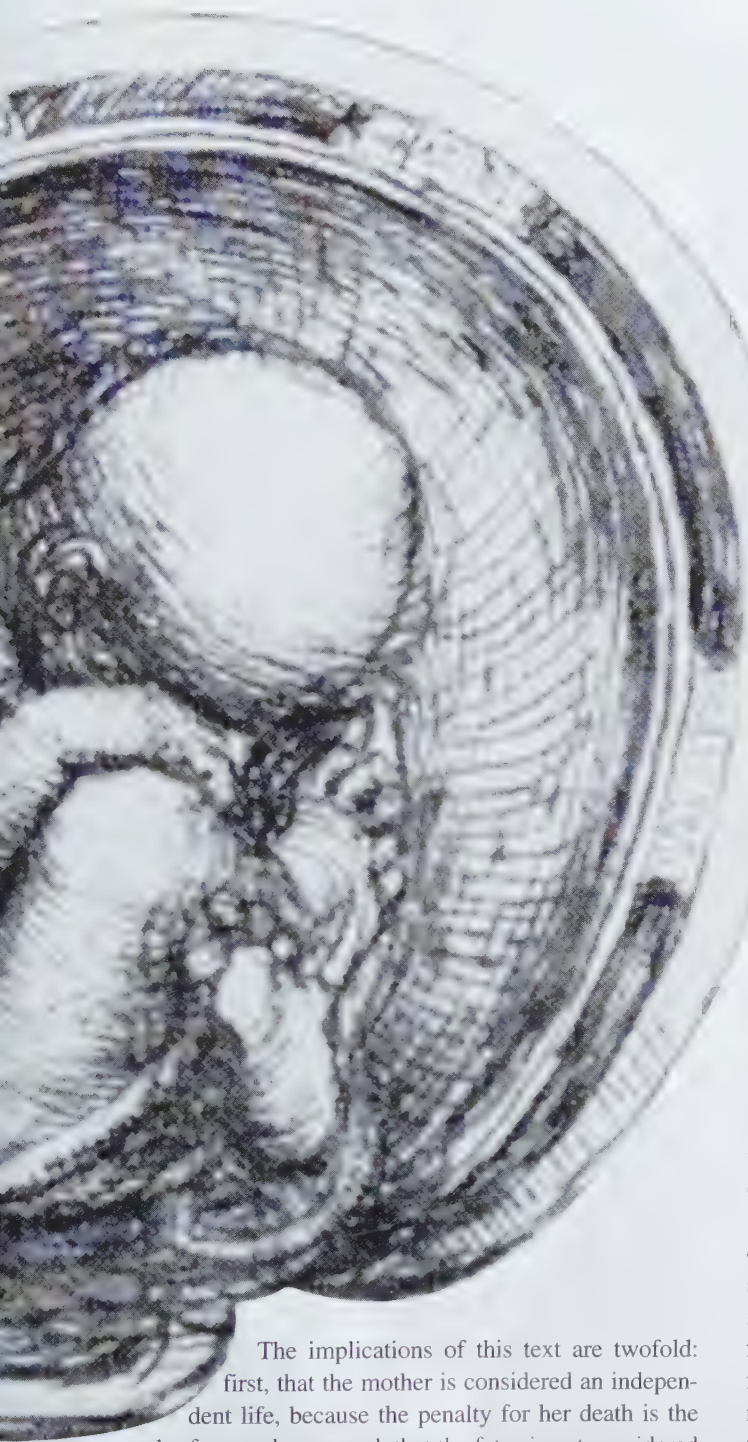
Jews and Christians  
Will Answer Differently

by Leila Bronner

The question of whether abortion is murder is one of the most divisive issues in America. Participants in such debates may cite a generic religious authority but rarely acknowledge that Jewish and Christian traditions have different answers to this question. Both traditions are grounded in the Bible, so how did these differences arise? This issue is salient even in our secularized society because the Bible still shapes our morality, and, more importantly, because telling a woman that she is committing murder is vastly different from telling her that abortion is a complicated moral issue.

The Hebrew Bible does not explicitly describe abortion as murder or explicitly oppose it. The pivotal biblical text is Exodus 21:22-23.

*When two men fight, and one of them pushes a pregnant woman so that her fruit be expelled, but no harm (ason) befall (her), then shall he be fined as her husband shall assess, and the matter placed before the judges. But if harm (ason) befall (her), then shall you give life for life.*



The implications of this text are twofold: first, that the mother is considered an independent life, because the penalty for her death is the penalty for murder; second, that the fetus is not considered an independent life, because the penalty for accidental abortion of the fetus is only a monetary fine. Causing the loss of the fetus under these circumstances is an offense, but not a capital crime.

In the Jewish tradition, only a few texts relate to the fetus, and thus to abortion. The Talmud states that for the first 40 days, the fetus should be considered mere fluid in the womb (*Yevamot* 69b). Elsewhere, the Talmud twice (*Hullin* 55a; *Gittin* 23b) describes the fetus as “part of the mother” (*ubar yerekh imo*; the Latin counterpart is *pars viscerum matris*), which indicates the dependence of the fetus on the mother and, like Exodus 21:22-23, implies that the fetus has no legal personality of its own.

The debate in *Arakhin* 7a on whether a condemned woman who is pregnant should be executed immediately or after she has given birth also seems to confirm that the fetus is not an independent entity, since the commentators tend to recommend immediate execution. Further support is lent by the interpretation given in *Sanhedrin* 76b on Leviticus 24:17: “If one smite any human person, then one is culpable” (*ki yakkeh kol nefesh adam*). The “any” is understood to include the day-old child but exclude the fetus, for the fetus in the womb is *lav nefesh hu* (not a person) until born. Commenting on this verse, Rashi states that only when the fetus “comes into the world” is it a “person.”

The pivotal rabbinic text on abortion is found in *Mishnah Oholot* 7:6.

*If a woman was in hard travail [such that her life is in danger], the child must be cut up while it is in the womb and brought out member by member, since the life of the mother has priority over the life of the child; but if the greater part of it was already born, it may not be touched, since the claim of one life cannot override the claim of another life.*

Again, the fetus is not a person when in the womb, but here the fetus becomes a person once the head or greater part of the body has emerged. It follows that when the Talmud in *Sanhedrin* 72b states that you are not permitted to murder one person in order to save another, the law is simply inapplicable to the fetus, because the fetus is not a person. Furthermore, the Talmud does allow dismemberment of a partially emerged child when the mother’s life is endangered, thus according final priority to the life of the mother over the life of the child.<sup>1</sup>

More evidence that Jewish tradition does not regard the fetus as a person independent of the mother emerges in the laws of the Sabbath. It is certainly permissible to desecrate the Sabbath to save the mother, but many pages of the Talmud are devoted to the question of whether it is permissible to do the same for the fetus. In *Arakhin* 7a, the commentators decide that if the mother dies before giving birth, the fetus may be removed from the dead mother on the Sabbath because at that point the fetus is considered a person, that is, no longer dependent on the mother. Here we see that the fetus has intrinsic value because the Sabbath may be desecrated to save it, but the very fact that this point was debated shows that the fetus is considered only as part of the mother except in unusual circumstances and, moreover, that an existing human life has precedence over a potential human life.

Jewish law (*halakhah*), influenced by the Exodus passage, has succeeded in guiding Jews on the issue of abortion. The *halakhah* clearly states that abortion cannot be considered murder, that the life of the mother takes precedence over the life of the fetus, and that the fetus is not a life separate from the mother prior to its birth.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church view on abortion derives from

# Our Sisters' Keepers

by Alice Sparberg Alexiou

On a warm autumn Sunday, I stood in the packed entrance lobby of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, looking over the crowd. The Promise Keepers were all over our nation's capital that weekend; the day after their rally, a few stood out in the museum crowd, sporting the signature dark green and navy blue PK caps. Hundreds of thousands of these smiling, well-behaved men had come for what they billed as a "sacred assembly." Everywhere, men were holding each other, crying, prostrating themselves on the ground, praying—for what, I'm not sure.

I was trying to be fair, but there was just too much about the Promise Keepers for me—a woman, and a Jewish one—to get upset about. For one, it was their mixed messages about the "woman's place"—like that New Testament passage they kept quoting, in which Paul tells the Ephesians that women should submit to men, who in turn are supposed to serve women. "It's a loving submission," a young man patiently explained to me. "The whole thing is taken out of context. If my wife wants something, I'm not going to deny it." "What if she wants an abortion?" I ask slyly. The young man recoiled: "Alice, this is a spiritual battle between God and Satan." The posters carried by "PKers for Life" displaying bloody, eviscerated fetuses surely placed pro-choicers and Satan in the same camp.

The story in Washington that weekend had a wide Jewish angle as well. It got played out most succinctly right in the Holocaust Museum. "I came here to remember and pray," said Ted Broadway, a Presbyterian pastor from Medford, Ore., who told me he had lots of Jewish friends. "I pray that the

issue of the Messiah between Christians and Jews could be solved. I pray that the Jews find Christ as the Messiah."

You came here, to the Holocaust Museum, to pray for what? I shouldn't have been surprised. I'd been hearing this we-love-you-Jews-so-much-but-if-only-you-would-let-us-help-you refrain all weekend long. "We want the nation to be under Christ," a young man had told me

as I rode down to Washington with him and 850 men on a special chartered Amtrak "Gospel Express."

Apparently, so do the so-called messianic Jews—those *meshuggenehs* who think you can both accept Jesus and stay Jewish—to judge by how many of them showed up for this event. In fact, the event

began, unbelievably, with five messianists blowing shofars. Then David Chernoff, who leads a messianic congregation in Philadelphia, made a big deal over the fact that the PK rally, which was all about men begging Christ for forgiveness right on the Washington Mall, happened to fall on Shabbat Teshuvah, the Sabbath of Repentance.

I could almost laugh at such absurdity. Except that I'm feeling too queasy about this Christian movement, which, despite their protestations about not being political, is tied to the religious right. Behind their benign-sounding affirmations about responsibility and reconciliation, the real message is that they want us women to know our second-class place, and they want us Jews to know we are outcasts because we don't accept Jesus. All this scares me; we've heard it before.

Alice Sparberg Alexiou, who lives on Long Island, writes frequently about the Christian Right.

the third-century B.C.E. Greek mistranslation of Exodus 21:22-23:

*And if two men strive and smite a woman with child, and her child be born miscarried [imperfectly formed], he shall be forced to pay a penalty: as the woman's husband may lay upon him, he shall pay with a valuation. But if it be perfectly formed, he shall give life for life.*

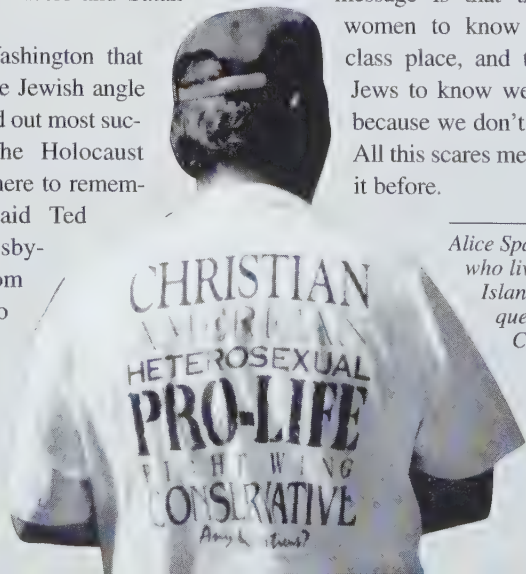
Obviously, the Septuagint is not true to the Hebrew original. It changes the Hebrew word for harm (*ason*) into a word in Greek meaning "form, icon," which *ason* could never mean, and changes the construction such that *ason* applies to the fetus rather than to the mother. In other words, the Septuagint assigns value to the fetus according to its stage of development. Influenced by the Septuagint, first century Hellenistic Jews such as Philo discuss the relative value of a fetus according to whether it is "shaped" or "unshaped," "formed" or "unformed." They regard only the shaped fetus as a full person, although they do not spell out at what month a fetus attains "shape."

Under the Catholic Church, the debate about abortion came to center on a refinement of viability: the question of when life begins, namely, when the soul enters the body of the fetus. In the Jewish tradition, ensoulment is moot. In contrast, the Catholic Church makes ensoulment a crucial question because the Catholic Church teaches that a soul that has not been baptized is condemned to eternal perdition. This is why the Catholic view on the question of whether a condemned woman who is pregnant should be executed immediately or after she has given birth is that she should be kept alive until she has given birth; if the mother is executed while pregnant, the soul of the fetus will be lost because the fetus is unbaptized. The early Church Fathers express a variety of opinions about the time of ensoulment. The Catholic Church finally made it dogma that ensoulment happens at conception.

In 20th century America, abortion

## Promise Keepers' scary views on abortion

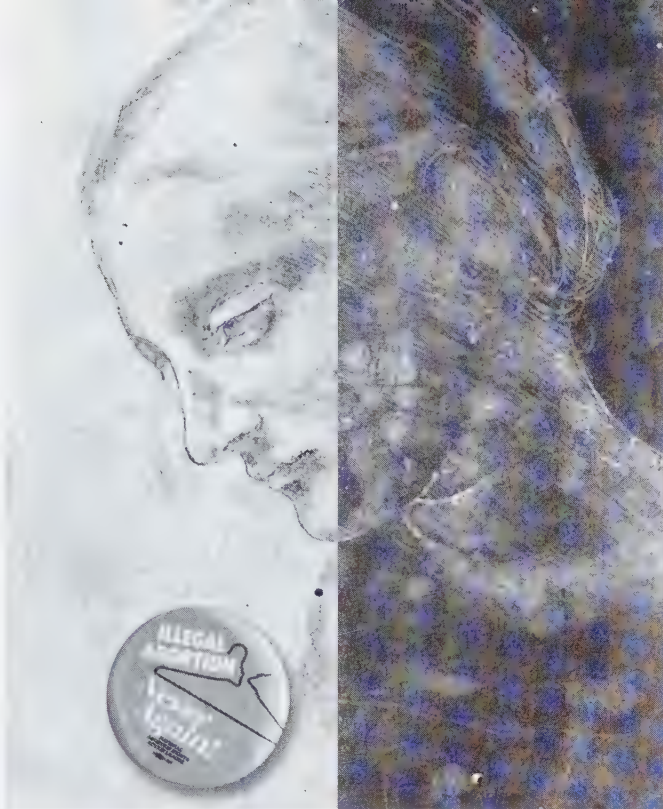
Participant in Promise Keepers rally in Washington, 1997.



has been thrown into the secular court of appeal: science. The ruling in *Roe v. Wade* allows first-trimester abortion in accordance with elementary principles of modern biology and on the basis of the right to privacy, but does not address the question of when life begins, that is, when ensoulment happens. Even science cannot provide us with empirical proof concerning the moment at which life begins. Science traditionally deals only with physical matters, not with metaphysical matters such as ensoulment. Thus, a scientist's views on abortion are likely to be fairly phlegmatic. Elie Shneour, director of the Biosystems Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif., notes, for example, that just as burning a blueprint for a house is not arson, so the destruction of a fertilized egg, the blueprint of a potential life, is not murder.

I think that we must acknowledge that in the near future, lawyers, doctors, scientists, and theologians will not be able to supply a generally acceptable answer to the question of the moment of ensoulment. Those concerned with this issue necessarily turn back to religion, specifically to the dogma of the Catholic Church. Those not concerned about ensoulment but still wishing to be guided by biblical teachings note that the Bible is always concerned with the sanctity of the born before the unborn, and thus there can be no "fundamental right to life which cannot be infringed" for the "unborn child."

We have come at last to the heart of the differences between the pro-choice and anti-abortion movements and between Jewish and Catholic traditions: when a fetus can be



## While Catholic tradition focuses on the soul of the fetus, Jewish law focuses on the life of the mother.

considered fully human (or ensouled), and whether the life of the mother has priority over the life of a fetus. While Catholic tradition focuses on the soul of the fetus, Jewish law focuses on the life of the mother. Of course, abortion remains an ethical and moral issue for many Jews, but it is decided case-by-case in consultation with the family and the rabbi, and considering spiritual, physical, emotional and socioeconomic factors.

We cannot settle the issue of abortion, then, because we have no secular way of dealing with the religious doctrine of ensoulment and because we do not acknowledge that ensoulment is tied to a particular religious tradition. In the United States, abortion often is discussed under the

guise of secularity but our opinions are shaped by religious teachings. The teachings of the Judaic and the Christian traditions differ profoundly on the issue of abortion, and difficulties result when such differences are elided. More authentic moral and religious considerations may well help to move us into framing the abortion debate in new ways, ways that are more respectful not only of historical sources but also of the multireligious society in which we live and toward which, as feminists and Jews, we owe our attentions. ■

*Leila Bronner, Litt.D., formerly Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and the University of Judaism, Los Angeles, has published most recently From Eve to Esther: Rabbinic Reconstructions of Biblical Women [Westminster/John Knox, 1994].*

1. These discussions turn on the technical Talmudic concept *rodef*. The term for a potential murderer is *rodef*, a pursuer or, in contemporary parlance, a stalker, one who pursues another in order to kill him. Under normal circumstances, a *rodef* may be killed if this is the only way in which the life of the intended victim can be saved. Two conflicting viewpoints about the applicability of the *rodef* principle to the fetus are offered by commentators. Some commentators believe that when it is the child who threatens the mother, then the law of *rodef* applies, even though the *rodef* is a minor and so not respon-

sible for his or her actions. Others believe that the mother's life is not being pursued by the child, but by "heaven," that is, the mother is dying as a result of natural causes, hence, the child's life cannot be made forfeit on the grounds of *rodef*, but still acknowledge that the mother's life is to be saved at the expense of the child's life.

2. For more details, see David M. Feldman, *Birth Control in Jewish Law*, 3rd ed. [New York: New York University Press, 1995]

# Watch This Woman!

## Insurance Commish Deborah Senn Turns Political Lap-Dog into Watch-Dog. What's Next?

by Carole Glickfeld

"I'm always getting sued," complains Deborah Senn, Washington state's first female Insurance Commissioner. But her lament is also a boast: Senn has made a career of taking on the business establishment and advocating—some say too vigorously—plans for reform.

Reelected as commissioner this year for her second term, Senn, together with her staff, is responsible for holding the insurance companies to the law, collecting millions in taxes and responding to thousands of customer complaints. More central to Senn's vision, however, is correcting the system's failure to protect consumers.

"Sure, I can just coast now and not get people mad at me," says the battle-hardened Senn about her second term.

"But I won't." This time around she has set her sights on including alternative medicines in health coverage, pursuing insurance claims by Holocaust survivors, and ending insurance discrimination against victims of domestic violence. An editorial-writer for the conservative *Spokesman-Review* in Spokane even conceded, "[Senn has] brought new ferocity to her agency, which used to function like a lap-dog."

With ink-black, spiky hair, cut at a chic salon while she talks on her cell phone, Senn is a classic "type A." At home she uses call-waiting heavily, usually with TV remote in hand to surf channels for news coverage. She flies to as many as five cities in a week to speak to consumer groups and health providers to build support for and publicize her issues.

After battling the utilities in Illinois and drafting legislation for Washington state regulating telephone solicitors and lowering phone rates for low-income people, Senn ran for Insurance Commissioner in 1992. She took on a "good old boy," a 16-year incumbent who was often seen golfing and who could be depended on to regularly approved rate increases for the insurance industry. The cash-strapped Senn, by contrast, pledged to take no contributions "from anyone regulated by the Commissioner's office, including agents and brokers"—though it would have been legal. The literature of her campaign asked, "What has your insurance commissioner done for you lately?" State-wide, Washington politics are more conservative than those in the liberal Seattle area, and that year Senn was the only statewide candidate to defeat an incumbent.

Going into her second term, Senn has taken on the cause of victims of domestic violence, who according to a publication covering the industry, *Claims*, are protected in 15 states. "This is the thing," she says in a confidential voice that betrays her distaste. She explains that insurance companies consider partners of batterers, usually women, more likely to file claims—for damage to themselves, their homes and cars. Fear of losing insurance, she says, might inhibit a woman from reporting the abuse. Twice, the insurance industry has successfully lobbied against Senn's proposed legislation to prevent such discrimination. Now industry groups have put forward two proposals of their own, both of which Senn finds lacking. "There's no documented evidence," claims Phil Nudelmann, head of the Kaiser-Group Health HMO, "even anecdotal, that anyone's been denied coverage or had their rates go up" after being identified as victims

### Washington state 'sheriff' revels in shootouts with insurance sector

By NEDETTO

Senn gives copy office

ke-up call

watchdog some firms

Commish

Deborah Senn has put her insurance

commissioner's office at center-stage on

reform. By Mary Bruno

commissioner Deborah Senn is a vocal consumer advocate in Washington, DC, last spring and has been getting the

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### NEWSMAKERS '94

Senn: An activist locks horns with the insurance industry

COVER

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Ms. Senn and industry are in

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### SPOKANE STATE

Plan lets ill people get health coverage

Pre-existing conditions no bar

SEATTLE—Insured companies would

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State law gives

companion a lot of

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into that."

Deborah Senn

### State critical of Blue Cross executive pay

Compensation ranks high for plan of its size, Senn says

By Tom Pridmore

the

### Senn: The consumer's commissioner

Some still don't know what to make of maverick insurance chief

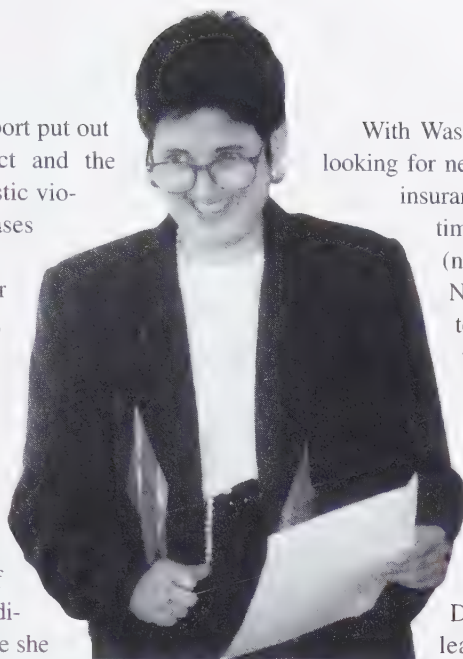
By Tom Pridmore

the

of domestic abuse." Nevertheless, a report put out jointly by the Women's Law Project and the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic violence documents 23 discrimination cases nation-wide.

Senn's reforms have not made her popular with the insurance companies, who have repeatedly sued her, particularly over her refusal to grant rate hikes. Unlike her predecessor, Senn is widely viewed as uncooperative, Chicago-tough and a solo player. "I wish when she has a problem, she'd call the insurance providers together and ask what we can do," commented a CEO of one major insurance company on condition of anonymity. "She seems to believe she can get more out of an adversarial than a collaborative and cooperative relationship."

Employees who date from the previous regime have also taken issue with Senn, filing more than 150 grievances over matters such as whether Senn improperly granted a staff member an afternoon off. All the claims were found to be without merit and thrown out.



**She fights for the insurance rights of domestic violence victims.**

With Washington's two-term limit, Senn is now looking for new outlets for her energies. Though the insurance industry may object to Senn, one-time political consultant Karen Cooper (now State Executive Director of NARAL) says, "If there were a poll tomorrow, Deborah would probably be the most popular politician in the state." The state's Democratic governor, Gary Locke, is expected to run for a second term, so friends have been urging Senn instead to take on Republican Senator Slade Gordon in 2000.

Perhaps presciently, two years ago, in a revue to raise money for Democratic candidates, Senn, in a leather jacket, mini-skirt and boots, spoofed herself, singing satirical lyrics to "Fame": "Demos look at me, and tell me what you see. You ain't seen the best of me yet." ■

*Carole Glickfeld is the Seattle-based author of Useful Gifts, a collection of stories about a family with deaf parents and hearing children.*

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# Two Lesbian Women and Their Pretty Straight Wedding

BY SUSAN SAPIRO

very morning as Michelle and Aimée\* bind their arms with tefillin, they recite, "V'erastich li l'olam . . ." ("I will betroth you to me forever, I will betroth you to me with righteousness, justice, kindness, and mercy. I will betroth you to me faithfully, and you shall know Adonai") [Hosea 2:21-22]. This is the traditional formula accompanying the laying of *tefillin*, but for Michelle and Aimée, the words remind them not only of their commitment to God but also of their commitment to each other, which they sanctified with these words two years ago.

Six months after they began their relationship, Michelle and Aimée knew that theirs was a lifetime commitment, and they wanted to mark this in some way. Originally they planned to move in together and have a housewarming party. But when they found themselves inviting friends to "a little thing" at their home, they realized they needed to sanctify their relationship Jewishly. After five months of planning, consulting, writing, and shopping, Michelle and Aimée held their commitment ceremony before 90 family members and friends.



What distinguished this ceremony from many other gay and lesbian weddings is that Michelle and Aimée are *halachically* committed Jews. As such, both women took the liturgy of their wedding ceremony very seriously. Many Jewish couples marry without understanding the texts that a traditional Jewish wedding comprises.

Michelle and Aimée, however, scrutinized every sentence of the ritual to determine how they could both respect the integrity of the texts and also adapt them to their situation. Could they call the ritual *kiddushin*, the legal term for a Jewish, heterosexual marriage? What could they say instead of the traditional betrothal formula, which declares that the ceremony is "according to the law of Moses and Israel"? Questions of liturgy—not food or decor—preoccupied Michelle and Aimée from the moment they made their decision.

Michelle and Aimée both grew up in Conservative Jewish homes. They now belong to a traditional, egalitarian *minyan*. Observant Jews in theology and practice, they both came to a "progressive, interpretive" understanding of Judaism, "independent of gay issues." "Nothing has changed

KETUBBAH ART BY SHARON SAVITSKY

Aimée's and Michelle's last names have been omitted to protect the couple's privacy, though they say they would be happy to advise other couples on how to plan their own ceremonies. Contact LILITH for details.

[religiously] in my life since I came out,” declares Michelle. Some have questioned how Michelle and Aimée—who observe Shabbat, keep kosher, and pray daily—reconcile their practice with *halachic* Judaism’s negative view of homosexuality. Michelle and Aimée respond that they place traditional Jewish views of homosexuality in the same category as other problematic Jewish texts and issues. “There are [passages] in the Torah about genocide that bother me but that doesn’t mean I don’t read about Amalek,” says Aimée, referring to Deut. 25:17-19, and its commandment that Jews wipe out the descendants of their biblical enemy, Amalek.

When they first decided to have some type of ceremony to mark their mutual commitment, Michelle and Aimée were both uncomfortable referring to the upcoming event as marriage. The turning point for them came one Shabbat morning at services when one couple had an *aufruf* (an *aliyah* traditionally given to the couple on the Shabbat before their wedding) and another couple announced their engagement. Michelle and Aimée saw how much joy surrounded those couples and concluded that they, too, desired and deserved similar support and emotion from their community, to celebrate their union. Soon they began telling people that they were getting “married” and planned to have an *aufruf* at their *shul*.



Michelle's  
grandfather,  
an Orthodox rabbi,  
even led the Grace  
After Meals.

Finding a rabbi to officiate at the ceremony was a challenge, because rabbis who would officiate at a gay wedding tended to be too liberal for the couple’s traditional perspective, and rabbis who shared Michelle and Aimée’s concern with *halacha* would not (or could not) participate. Two Conservative rabbis declined to officiate because of political considerations. Another rabbi turned them down for the same reason he would have refused a heterosexual couple: he did not know them well enough. In the end, a lay friend of the couple’s officiated at the ceremony.

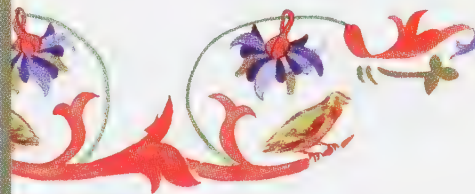
In planning their ceremony, Michelle and Aimée devoted most of their energies to examining the traditional wedding liturgy. As they explained in the booklet they prepared for their guests, “As traditionally committed Jews, both of us recognize that what we are doing here today is not *kiddushin*, a Jewish legal term used to describe a heterosexual marriage. We feel strongly, however, and we hope that you will agree, that it is certainly as valid.” They decided to call their ceremony a *kiddush ahava* (sanctification of love), a term that retained the *k’dusha* (sanctification) aspect of *kiddushin*.

In planning their traditional ceremony, Michelle and Aimée relished the freedom they felt in making changes compared with

the relative constraints on a heterosexual couple. “But again, that didn’t make us feel that we had total *carte blanche*,” added Aimée.

The next hurdle was the betrothal formula: “Behold, you are consecrated to me by this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel.” As traditional Jews, Michelle and Aimée felt that they could not say these words. As Michelle explains, “it seemed too radical. How can you possibly say this is ‘according to the laws of Moses and Israel’?” Instead, they chose to recite the verse associated with donning *tefillin* (the small, black leather boxes a traditional Jew would strap to forehead and arm while reciting the morning prayers): “I will betroth you to me (*v’erastich*) forever, I will betroth you to me with righteousness, justice, kindness, and mercy. I will betroth you faithfully, and you shall know Adonai.” They liked this verse both because it linked their relationship to the love between God and Israel and because, as Michelle explained, “it sounds legal, because *erusin* is a word that is part of the traditional wedding ceremony” and is a form of the verb *erastich*. The verse is also included in their *ketubah* and inscribed in their wedding rings.

Michelle and Aimée’s love for and knowledge of Jewish tradition was most eloquently expressed in the alternative they prepared to the traditional *sheva b’rachot* (seven blessings), a key part of the Jewish wedding.



Michelle and Aimée wanted to use the form of the *sheva b’rachot*, but not the content, because they felt that many of the blessings were not relevant to their situation. They

also did not want to change the existing blessings as neither is interested in “creative liturgy.” Instead, they decided to use *shiv’ah mekorot* (seven texts). They began gathering their favorite biblical, rabbinic, and liturgical texts and ended up with 35—too many! As they sifted through the texts, they noticed categories emerging: some verses described their relationship to each other, some their relationship to their community, some related to family, and some to God. Choosing seven texts, they arranged them from personal to communal to transcendent. At the ceremony, pairs of friends recited in Hebrew and English the chosen verses along with Michelle and Aimée’s explanations of each text’s significance to them. [See sidebar.] One pair of friends sang their assigned blessing, another person added his own commentary, and another, with a *yeshiva* background, recited the text in a traditional Talmudic sing-song style.

Because liturgy was the most important focus for Michelle and Aimée, they put their parents and friends in charge of the reception. The ceremony raised the “family issues” that most gay and lesbian couples confront: their families’ reactions, which ranged

# Sheva B'rachot The Seven Blessings

Traditionally, the *Sheva B'rachot*, seven blessings, are recited for a bride and groom. Uncomfortable with this formulation, Aimée and Michelle nonetheless wanted to perform a similar ritual at their own ceremony. Culling their favorite verses from Jewish texts, they substituted seven texts that they felt embody their values and guide their lives. They chose seven people they love to recite these blessings in a new ritual, *Shiv'ah Mekorot*.

1. Theme: Our relationship to each other. Set me a seal upon your heart, a seal upon your arm. For love is as strong as death, passion as mighty as She'ol. Its sparks are a raging fire, a devouring flame. Many waters cannot extinguish love and rivers cannot drown it. (Song of Songs 8:6-7)
2. Theme: Family (especially parent-child relationships). Children's children are the crown of elders, and the splendor of children is their parents. (Proverbs 17:6)
3. Theme: Our home. Teach them to your children; speak of them when you are at home and when you travel, when you go to sleep and when you wake up. Place them as a sign on your hand and as reminders between your eyes. Write them on your doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:7-9)
4. Theme: Interpersonal Relationships/Social Ethics. Who is wise? One who learns from everyone. . . . Who is respected? One who respects all creatures. . . . Don't disdain any person or be contemptuous of any thing, for there is no person who does not have his/her hour and no thing which does not have its place. (*Avot* 4:1,4)
5. Theme: Communal Responsibility. Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking slander. Avoid evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. (Psalms 34:14-15)
6. Theme: God. And for your miracles which are with us daily, and for your wonders and your kindnesses which occur at every time—evening, morning, and noon—You are good, for your mercy is endless, and merciful, for your lovingkindness does not cease. We always place our trust in You. (*Amidah* prayer)
7. Theme: A New Beginning. The Jews had light, happiness, rejoicing, and honor. May we too be worthy of these blessings. (*Havdallah* prayer)

from blatant dis-approval to reluctant acceptance to outright enthusiasm and support. In the end, all parents overcame their reservations and participated happily.

Aimée's mother's was initially concerned about the public nature of the ceremony. Ultimately, Aimée says admiringly, her mother "really worked it through." For the reception, Aimée's mother rented tablecloths, bought matching serving pieces, and made centerpieces for all of the tables. After the ceremony, she even brought photographs and the couple's wedding booklet to show her colleagues at work. After Michelle came out to her family, they began attending P-FLAG [Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays] meetings. And once her parents were assigned their specific tasks for organizing the wedding reception, they became excited and involved. Michelle's mother spent weeks shopping for decorative objects to adorn the tables and silver-plated serving pieces.

Michelle's grandfather, an Orthodox rabbi in his 70s, surprised

both Michelle and Aimée with his reaction to their *Kiddush Ahava*. According to Michelle,

his first response was mere acceptance of the situation. Yet, once he saw their involvement with traditional Judaism and got to know Aimée personally, he became very enthusiastic. He even led the Grace After Meals in his old-world accent by saying, "*Birshus ha-kalles, yefos to'ar u-yefos mareh*" ("In honor of the beautiful brides"). Aimée says, "It blew us away." At the end of the ceremony, Aimée stamped on a glass. After many months of planning each ritual in detail, and after weeks of discussing which one of them should perform this last—traditionally male—act, the couple decided the night before the ceremony that Aimée should do the honors: Michelle was planning to wear open-toed shoes. ■

Susan Sapiro is a researcher at the Heritage Interactive Project, a multimedia Jewish history project, at WNET in New York City.

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# Family Secrets

Did your Jewish family once have a retarded relative hidden away? An old photograph holds new revelations about the author's long-dead sister.

by Mona Kornberg

I was 48 years old when I first saw my sister. I was browsing through a family album looking at a picture I had seen many times before. But this time something was different. The picture was the only one I had of my sister, who died when she was three years old, years before I was born. It was also one of the few I had of my father, who died when I was one year old. There was a horse-drawn carriage; my sister and I sat in the front seat beside the driver; my father and mother sat in the back seat with another woman I did not recognize.

To this day I do not know what made me look at the picture differently. Perhaps I was simply ready to see what was there. There seemed to me to be something odd about my sister's face. It took a while for the thoughts to penetrate. I kept staring at the face of the three-year-old child in the photo until I realized that the features reminded me of a child with Down syndrome. At first I told myself I must be mistaken, for the thought was so incredible. But the more I looked at the picture, the more possible it seemed.

My mother had died 12 years earlier and the only person I could think of asking was her sister, my Aunt Ann. I traveled to Brooklyn, NY, where my aunt lived and asked her if my sister had been "retarded." "Shhh," she said, "it's a *'shanda'* [shame], we don't talk about it." I knew then my suspicion was correct. I was filled with questions my aunt did not want to answer. My mother had told me my sister died of pneumonia; never did she mention anything about Down syndrome. But my mother never spoke about anything to do with the family. She never told me about my father and when I asked, she answered with the fewest words possible. I got the message. As a young child I learned not to ask. But now I wanted to learn the truth.

"Why didn't Mom tell me?" I asked Aunt Ann. "We didn't talk about it; it was difficult for her at the time," she said. "What happened to my sister?" Through persistent questioning, I found out my mother had cared for my sister until she was three years old and then, against her wishes but at my father's insistence, she had placed her in an institution "somewhere in New York State." My aunt could not remember where the institution was or what it was called. My sister had died there.

I returned home to Toronto more determined than ever to find out what had happened to my sister. But where was I to start? I called a friend who knew something about newspaper reporting. She suggested I try to find the death certificate. I called around and found the

phone number for New York State records in Albany. Not knowing her birth date, I requested a search over a three-year period. I filled out the forms with the little information I had, mailed in the fee, and waited for information. Several weeks later the death certificate arrived in the mail. Reading it made everything very real. The cause of death was listed as pneumonia, as my mother had said, but she had died in a hospital in a town I had never heard of. My husband and I took out a map of New York state and tried to locate the town. His research at the library provided a list of institutions in New York State. I found the institution where my sister had been placed. I called the director and asked if there were records of my sister's stay there. From the institution's registry, the director confirmed my sister had lived there for a very short time. Several months after she was placed, she contracted pneumonia and was transferred to the hospital where she died. The director was sympathetic. In the days before penicillin, the life span for children like my sister was short. Unfortunately, the records of this period had been destroyed and there was no way of learning what her stay in the institution had been like.

I needed to know more and was able to track down the cemetery in Queens, NY, where my sister was buried. It was the same one where my father was buried. My daughter and I made the journey to New York. My father was buried in a section of the cemetery reserved for *landsmen* from the *shetl* in Eastern Europe where he was born. It took us a while to find my sister's grave, which was almost hidden in a separate children's section in front. I had grown up in New York and never knew my sister was buried here. My mother never took me to visit her grave. I stared at the simple gravestone, "Sandra Silver, born 1934, died 1937." My daughter and I placed some pebbles on the gravestone and recited the

Jewish prayer for the dead.

Over the following few weeks, I experienced a mixture of emotions: anger at my mother for not telling me; sadness for her and what she must have gone through. I tried to imagine what it would be like to place my three-year-old child in an institution and have her die two months later. I could not imagine ever doing that, but then I did not know what it had been like for my mother and father. There was so much I did not know! I did not know how my mother could have let me go through three pregnancies without sharing this information.

Soon after I returned from New York, my daughter announced she was pregnant. I did some research and dis-

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correct.

# Hiding Our Relatives in the Mental Hospital

by Susan Schnur

Through the '30s, '40s and '50s, before the push to mainstream mentally ill children and adults into their communities, my father, Bernard Schnur, a physician, was employed part-time by a state residential psychiatric hospital. I can remember as a child traveling way out into the country with him where he would disappear into some grim, massive, scary-looking buildings for an hour or two while I would stay outside, happily collecting pine cones.

On the drive home, my father, uncharacteristically subdued, would invariably tell me about all the Jewish residents in the facility, how this one or that one from our home town had a daughter or a brother who'd been institutionalized there for 25 years or more.

My father was moved and troubled, I think, by three things. First, what seemed to him to be a high incidence of severe mental illness in the Jewish community. (I can remember him looking across the pews at *shul* during the High Holidays and remarking that, for every 4 or 5 rows—every 30 families or so—there was a profoundly retard-

ed or mentally ill, institutionalized family member.)

Second, that the existence of these kin was a closely guarded secret. Though my father might regularly see family members visiting at the psychiatric hospital, outside—*in der richtige welt* (in the real world)—there was no mention of these relatives. Their existence was universally understood to be a secret.

Third, as my father reminded me even this morning when I called him to confirm my memories, "The Jews, by and large, seemed to take very good care of their institutionalized kin. They visited often—long, involved visits—and they were kindly, empathic, and very attached. Up and down the hallways of the mental hospital, I would see Jewish family members. Their presence was felt. The non-Jews, on the other hand, made a different impression on me overall. They were more casual about retardation and mental illness; they weren't as secretive. I remember their dutiful visits before Easter, but mostly, they didn't seem to pay much attention to these family members. The Jewish families seemed to have both more intense visits and a need to keep them secret."

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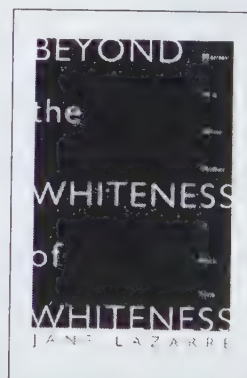
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covered that there are different causes for Down syndrome: one is genetic and the other is not. I went for a blood test and anxiously awaited the results. Mine was not the genetic variety. Reassured, I shared this information with my daughter. I did not want there to be secrets between us.

I used to think my family was unique. My mother and her family emigrated to New York from Russia when she was five years old. My mother's father died before I was born and her mother, my bubba, died when I was nine. My mother never talked about her family or her childhood.

resurgence of interest in genealogy. Our generation is trying to discover its history, to trace our families. What was it like in the *shtetls* our parents left? What happened to the rest of our family members?

Somewhere in the United States I have first cousins I have never met. Two years ago I managed to find one of them, a daughter of my father's brother. She knew my father and my family but had left home by the time I was born. She never knew I existed. We now visit each other and have become friends as well as cousins. She shares



Whenever I asked, I received terse answers. I used to speculate that she had an unhappy childhood, too painful to talk about. But her sister, my Aunt Ann, would sometimes share a fond recollection of her family that provided a glimpse of a loving father. What would explain this "blanking out" of a family history? I never knew what my father or grandparents were like. I never found out what happened to the grandparents I never met. I never found out what happened to my mother's two brothers who did not emigrate to America with the rest of the family. Whatever it was, even my Aunt Ann would not talk about it.

Over the years, in discussions with Jewish friends whose families also emigrated from Eastern Europe, I have discovered that my family was not unique. These friends encountered walls of silence when they asked about family history. Perhaps that is why there is such a

with me her memories of the relatives I never knew, of some of the family secrets *she* has uncovered.

Most of my parent's generation and many of their offspring have died. There are secrets I will never learn about. I talk to my own children about my childhood and about the relatives I knew and those I did not know. I answer their questions and talk about subjects that are sometimes difficult. I try very hard not to keep any secrets from them. ■

*Dr. Mona Kornberg is a consultant in training and organization development. She is married, has three children and two grandchildren and lives and works in Toronto.*



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# Suleika and Me

from a novel by Ruth Knafo Setton

Fierce African sun burns on my head as I weave my way between tiny white tombs packed helter-skelter, nearly on top of each other, half-hidden by stray grasses and tall weeds blowing in the hot wind. A white dome, about eight feet high, rises above Suleika's tomb. The inscription is painted in child-like black letters. The first four lines are in Hebrew. Underneath, in French, are these words:

*Ici repose Mlle Solica Hatchouel  
 Née a Tanger en 1817  
 Refusant de rentrer  
 Dans la religion is-  
 lamisme les Arabes  
 L'ont assassinee a Fez  
 en 1834 Arrachee de sa  
 Famille tout le monde  
 Regrette cette enfant  
 Sainte*

(Here rests Mlle Solica Hatchouel, born in Tangiers, in 1817. Refusing to enter the Islamic religion, the Arabs assassinated her in Fez in 1834. Torn from her family, all the world mourns this holy child.)

It is July 1981. I am 4 months pregnant as I stand before her tomb. I cannot explain the urgent desire that led me here to the Jewish cemetery of Fez. A name in a book that suddenly illuminated the page as if it were a medieval manuscript. The letters shone with the promise of mystery, magic, secret. I touched her name on the page the way I used to touch pictures in books as a child, hoping to get sucked into that other world. Already wanting to penetrate every border, open every door.

She was a bad girl. Her mother couldn't stand the sight of her. When she laughed, her mother wanted to shut her up. When she dreamed about the future, her mother swore there wouldn't be one. Suleika was no angel. She knew her mother hated her and she figured: I can't do anything right anyway, and whatever I do I get beaten, so I

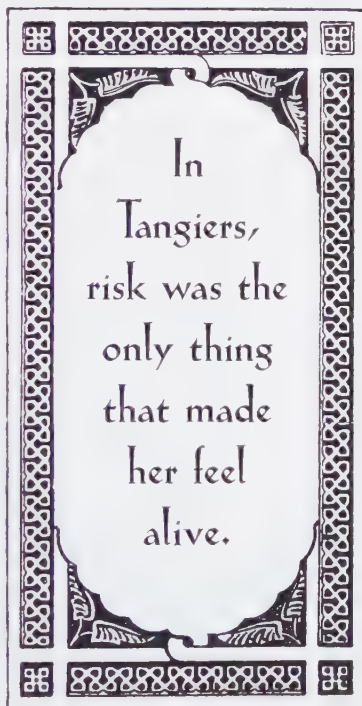
might as well do what I want. She got into trouble every day, hung around with the Arabs. In Tangiers, Jews and Arabs lived side by side, but still, there was a high wall that separated them. It was dangerous for Jews to break through the wall. Only someone desperate like Suleika would take the

chance. Once you crossed over to the other side, you were in their hands—completely.

The risk was the only thing that made her feel alive. By the time she turned 17, she was hard and bitter. She'd been beaten so many times it left her numb. She didn't care about anything anymore. Then her mother sold her in an arranged marriage to a 60-year-old widower with six kids. Ugly as a sardine, with bulging eyes and a red nose that dripped snot down his shirt.

The wedding was coming closer and closer. She got wilder. There was only one thing that kept her going. In the evenings, she sat in her courtyard and listened to the music that came from the courtyard next door, where an Arab family lived. She heard the sound of a lute, and a man's voice, singing in Spanish or Arabic, sometimes just humming the melody. The music made her cry. It made her dream.

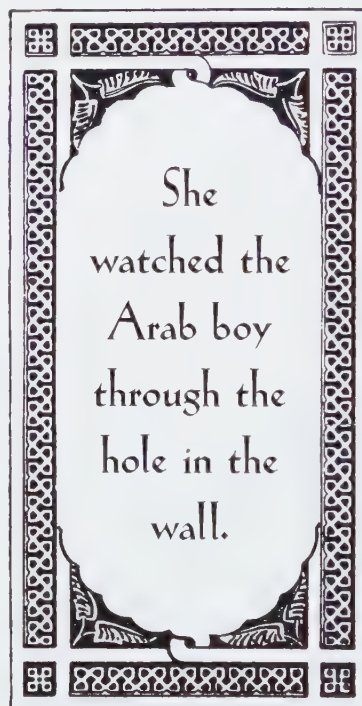
One night, about a week before her wedding, her mother realized she was going to lose her slave, and she beat the hell out of Suleika with a broom, leather belt, everything she lay her hands on. Crying, Suleika ran to the courtyard. The music was coming from next door. She went to the stone wall, feeling with her fingers for a hole. She saw a gap in the wall, where a stone had fallen out, and looked through. Taleb sat cross-legged, lute upright between his legs. His eyes were closed, and he was singing. This was the first time she'd really seen him. He'd been away at boarding school. When he was home, he didn't go out with the others; instead, he spent his time playing music in the courtyard. He was about her age, but different, quiet. And very handsome.



Every day after that, she watched him. I want this boy, she thought. I'm going to mess with him. But her plan backfired. One day she whispered his name through the hole in the wall, and he saw her. He came to the wall and stared at her for a long time. That night he sang a new song. She pressed her face against the hole in the wall and watched him. Every string he strummed vibrated inside her. When he finished, he came to the wall and touched her face with the same fingers that had played through her. "That was for you," he told her. From now on, they'll all be for you."

After that, it was impossible to stay in her old life. Her mother's beatings, the old dripping cousin. She begged Taleb to run away with her. He was engaged to marry, too. Another arranged marriage. He'd never seen the bride, but it was too late: there was no room in his heart for anyone but Suleika. One morning, very early, they ran away to the Kasbah of Tangiers, where people who have secrets go to hide. They got married. The only way they could do it was if she recited the Shahada, the Formula of Conversion: *La ilaha illa Allah, Mohammadu rasoul Allah*. There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His Prophet. If it meant they'd be together, she'd have said anything. They moved into a beat-up old shack, but they were happy. They were together. He played his music at a nearby club, and when he was done, he came home to her.

After a month, he was on his way home from the club when two men jumped him. The brothers of the girl he'd jilted. Suleika was at home, waiting for him. She knew something was wrong when he didn't show up. At dawn she went to look for him. She found him on the ground, lute smashed at his side. She threw herself on him, covered his body with hers. She howled like a beast in pain. People came running. She clung to him, but they pulled her away. She stood and looked around and realized she was completely alone. Lost. She didn't know what to do, where to go. She wanted to die with Taleb, to go with him wherever he went. She stood alone that day, waiting for a sign from him. After a long time she heard a low hum. Taleb's hum. It came from far away, and it drew her. It led her back to her family's *sla* (synagogue) in the Fuente Nueve. All the Jews were there, praying. When they saw her, most of them threw stones at her. They called her a whore and a traitor. Her mother threw the most stones. "I've come home," she told them. But the Arabs from the Kasbah had followed her. "We don't think so," they said. "Did you forget the words you spoke? You're ours now." A fight broke out. They nearly tore her in half. In the end, the Arabs killed her.



And yet in one of the many odd notes in her tale, Arab women worship her today as a saint. They come to her tomb in the Jewish cemetery in Fez, bringing plates of couscous (even a dead girl needs to keep up her strength), bunches of wild flowers, a lucky *hamsa*, a magic coin. Meanwhile the Jewish women light a candle and place it in one of the niches in the white dome over her tomb. The niches are filled with remnants of white candles, burned prayers. The women chant, pray, sing, cry, beg her to hear their voices. Usually they ask her for a baby, or help in getting pregnant, or avoiding a miscarriage. Our Suleika, who never had a child of her own, is the secret ingredient of successful pregnancies. She has become a woman's saint. In saint hierarchy, that means a saint too minor (too female) to have her own *hiloula* (or, for Jews, a festive pilgrimage on Lag ba'Omer), relegated to birth, illness in the family, menstrual cramps, you know: women's stuff. "Her *baraka* is still strong," the caretaker of the cemetery assures me. "She is still as powerful as ever. The women never stop coming to her."

Arab women. Jewish women. Side by side. Praying to a dead teenage girl. In death obliterating the border that in life she couldn't cross.

Which Suleika do I show you? Bad girl or good girl? Arab, Christian, Jewish version: take your pick. Over 300 at last count. Want her to be dragged against her will next door to the Arab house? Then go with the Jews and Christians. Their Suleika is an angel, a martyr-in-the-making. One writer calls her "a white rose of virginity." Another puts words in her mouth: "Dying is the only good I wish for!" Not

exactly my idea of a fun date. But the Arab next door wants her. He's fat and leering and in the market for a second wife. No, we can do better than that. He's young and handsome, and tells his mother: "Yo Mama, get me one of those." Too hackneyed, too Romeo and Juliet? Get Tahra in here. She's the Arab woman next door, an actress of unusual range and passion, an interested party pulling strings on Taleb's behalf. Whether she's the widow yearning for a daughter, or Jealous Wife #1, or the mother who wants to make her son happy, or a girl the same age as Suleika, she throws herself into the part and carries it to its utmost limits.

She needs a worthy adversary. Most Suleikas are too flat and passive—sleepwalking towards death—to take Tahra on. Enter Simha: bitch-mama extraordinaire. Mommy Dearest is Simha on a good day. She gave Cinderella's wicked step-

mother advice on how to raise her daughter. The husband, as in all these stories, is weak, inconsequential. He's holed up somewhere studying Torah, arguing with dead rabbis while the drama of life unfolds around him. "You know best, dear," he says and returns to his texts as Simha chases Suleika through the house with a weapon of her own invention: a stick to which she's attached a donkey tail. Her goal: to slap the unearthly beauty off Suleika's face. Some commentators, unable to comprehend the extent of Simha's viciousness, transform her with four letters—from mother into *stepmother*, a worthy addition to any fairy tale.

So here's the scene: you've got Suleika in the middle, between these two Amazons of jealousy, selfishness, brutality. The climatic moment occurs during Pesach 1834. Suleika is 17, daydreaming at her chores. Simha finds her, and with a scream that chills the heart, races after her. Exhausted and desperate, Suleika runs outside the house and stops for a second. Where to go? What to do? Mom is gaining ground, sounds like Godzilla tramping down the stairs. Tahra opens her door, beckons: "Suleika, come to me! I'll be your mother, sister, best friend, \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)."

One night in a dream, I counted the steps between the Jewish house and the Arab house. There were 22. Twenty-two steps that span an eternity, a Sahara of yearning and ignorance.

Suleika hesitates between the two houses. Behind her, misery, another sure beating. Before her, who knows? She cries: "Your house will be my house!" and runs to Tahra, who pulls her inside and slams the door.

The next time we see Suleika she's facing the Caid of Tangiers, swearing she did *not* say the words. "I was born a Jew," she insists, "and I will die a Jew." Tahra steps in: "No way. The girl's a liar. She converted, and now she's recanting."

What do we do with a recanting Jew? Throw her in the dungeon, of course. And that's where she'd have languished and died, if rumors of her beauty hadn't traveled to the Sultan in Fez. This jaded, restless ruler sent for her.

The voyage from Tangiers to Fez takes several hours today. For Suleika in 1834, on mule, it took 6 days. She wasn't allowed to speak (the danger of words, especially a woman's words). Twice a day the guards allowed her to get off the mule, get down on all fours, and lap milk from a bowl like a cat. This voyage parallels a fairy tale heroine's journey into the woods. She emerges at the end, changed. When Suleika arrives in Fez, she's no longer a passive, bland, beautiful teenager. She's Joan of Arc for the Jews, Esther defending her people, Ruth embracing the God of the Jews and refusing to return to the wilder-

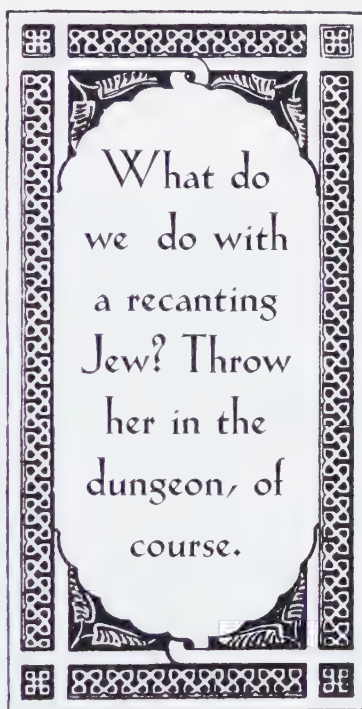
ness. She is now a gorgeous parable.

Now here's the choice. Play the game and see what you would choose, if the price is right for you. Door #1 or Door #2: you decide. Behind Door #1 is the sultan, Moulay Abderrahman. In his 40s, with a vast harem to choose from, he sees you and falls instantly, irrevocably, in love. He promises you everything. Jewels, silks and brocades, a life of ease, power. And most important, love. He asks you to marry him. He vows to take care of you forever. Still not enough? Let's up the ante. You fall in love with him too. Why not? He's good-looking, gentle in the way only the truly powerful can be. He wants you the way no one has ever wanted you before. His nearness makes you tremble. Stack the deck a touch more. He gets the Grand Rabbi of Fez, Rabbi Serfaty, to come in and talk to you. The rabbi himself tells you to play the Marrano-game. Survival, it's called in various corners of the world. Convert on the outside; believe what you want inside.

Wealth, security, love, your own faith in private. Count me in. Oh, you have to pay an entrance fee? How much? A pittance, a trifle, 11 words to be exact. It takes less than a minute to say. And does God really care if you call Him Yawveh or Allah?

Behind Door #2 is—what? The void our words attempt to cover? A cold, sharp wind blowing from beyond. The edge of a cliff. Is God waiting for you there? Arms open, saying: "Come home, my child. Come here and be warm." Or is there nothing? A long tunnel that opens onto endless night?

The moment of truth. Solica Hatchuel, come on down! Which will it be? Door #1 or Door #2? And you in the audience: which door do you choose?



I'm about three in the last photo taken of me before my parents and I leave Morocco for the United States. Curly blonde hair pulled back in a ponytail. Tiny white dress, sturdy bare legs. Light eyes that look questioningly at the photographer, or at the street ahead of me. A small wanderer through life, I clutch a black purse, and pause, only for an instant, on my journey. I am resolute, firmly rooted, feet in black patent leather shoes gripping the tiled outdoor corridor. My lips are dark, as if I've just eaten a plum and traces of the juice have stained my lips. Unsmiling, confident that in a moment I will continue on my path to the future, I can afford to let the photographer freeze me. What he doesn't know, what I don't yet know, is that in another moment, my patent leather shoes will be lifted from the tiles, will dangle in the air, as I hover between two worlds.

What happened to that girl? Did she live a parallel life to mine in the dim, powerful Morocco of my memory? Did she study? Was she married off early, as soon as her blood came? Was she afraid of the Arabs? Mistreated for being a Jew? Did she fall in love with a boy at school? Sneak out to meet him at the *souk*? Did she walk along the sea with him? I want that girl, I want to smell her flesh, to kiss the back of her knee, to see if her ears are dainty whirled seashells like mine, her eyes as wide, her hands as yearning. What became of her? I feel the pain of exile. I was ripped from her. The girl who crossed the ocean is already the shadow of myself. Right now when you think I am looking at you, I'm looking for her—across the mountains and seas—wondering if she even knows I exist, if she misses me at all.

Sometimes I think I've been writing her story all along, the girl I might have been, the girl who could have been me. Which door would she have chosen? Which would I choose?

The girls of Tetouan in their snow-white *juderia* sing songs of warning: "Girls, don't do what Suleika did, don't trust the Moor"; and songs in which the Sultan remembers his lost love:

*When you saw me, you felt it, too,  
Heat, light, fire—  
You sang it with your voice, your hands:  
There's no more than this: to be joined to you.  
What do riches and honors matter to me?  
What use is my throne without you?  
I only wanted to live inside you,  
And after tasting you, to die.*

*I wander through the desert, searching for her,  
My angel, my delicious love  
I'll never see you again.  
What good are my hands  
If they can't touch you?*

On a July day in 1981, I hurry across the Square Bab-Dekaken on my way to the cemetery. As fast as I can move, considering how hot is it, how pregnant I feel, how I'm dreading the moment of seeing her grave. I'm still an innocent, haven't drowned yet in the quicksand of Suleika's story, where every possibility, every version, opens yet another door—until it's not merely choosing between Door #1 and Door #2 but between infinite doors, each opening onto another, each offering yet another way to be or not to be.

The square is bounded on all sides. In one corner a man has set up a tired flea market: old appliances, used clothes, a broken chair toppling on three legs. The large brass doors

of the Sultan's Palace gleam, touched by the long fingers of the afternoon sun. Next to the palace is the entrance to the *mellah*, a gaping mouth that swallowed centuries of Moroccan-Jews and spit them back out as newly minted Muslims. Deceptively large and light, the *mellah* hides its dark decaying heart, like a woman wearing make-up to conceal ravages of time and grief. At the end of the square is the Jewish cemetery. Beggars claw and shriek like raucous seagulls. The Hebrew letters carved in iron, twisted and wailing, curl to the sky. They moved the cemetery about 50 years after Suleika's death. Witnesses swear she smelled like fresh-baked bread when they dug her up. They also swear that a white dove flew up at the instant of her death. And that the Sultan couldn't move his arm until he went to her tomb in the *mellah* and rubbed his arm against the cool stone.

Yeah, well.

I don't even have to close my eyes to see the square filling with the curious and the bloodthirsty. Mountain men, warriors from the Rif, Berbers from the Atlas Mountains, Blue Men from the Sahara. Dancers, sword swallows and storytellers. Jews—barefoot and in black, as the law requires—filling in. They bring Suleika in on a mule. Dressed in the coarse white *haik* she wore on the journey from Tangiers to Fez. Gone are the satin and silk dresses the Sultan lavished on her. The executioner slices the air with his sword. Slashes the veil from her face. The crowd gasps at her beauty. She stares through them, beyond them. She kneels at the block while he teases the back of her neck with the point of his sword. "The Sultan asked that you be given one last chance to change your mind," he says.

She can't move her head. She's pinned to the block. But her voice rises: "*Shema Yisra—*"

Her head flies at least 10 feet away.

I break an unwritten rule as I stand before Suleika's grave. "Never enter a cemetery when you are pregnant," my aunt warns me. "The souls are waiting there, desperate to live again. They steal into the fetus and take over the baby's life." I don't know yet that the child I'm carrying is a girl, that she will grow up to be as wild and rebellious as the Suleika of Arab legend, that I will look back with longing and pain at this moment. The moment before she kicks inside me for the first time, a sign of life in the house of death. The moment before I hug the tomb as if it were a living, breathing woman. The moment before I choose to follow her to the inevitable promised end. Twenty-two steps. An eternity. Or a breath on the back of my neck. I wheel around. The door opens. ■

*Ruth Knafo Setton, a Sephardic Jew born in Morocco, teaches at Lafayette College and has completed her first novel, Suleika.*

# Fin-de-Siècle Feminist Food Culture

by Diane Cole

Although I attended Jewish day school, my real religious education took place in the family kitchen. There, in the overheated, vaguely onion-and-paprika-scented nook, my mother handed down—in great Talmudic detail—lessons on the ritual preparation of food. Kashering meat, searching for crumbs before Passover, separating meat from milk, all were explained while she chatted up a storm about the vast extended family with whom in earlier years she had celebrated more holiday mischief than my brothers and I would ever have dared.

It's only now that what happens in the home (and thus in the kitchen) has come to be recognized as broadly significant, indicative of many cultural and familial nuances, worthy of academic consideration and debate. Only now are historians understanding why food has always loomed large in the imagination of a people for whom, in many eras and many countries, an extra crust could mean the difference between life and death. And only now that women are taking the spotlight as the caretakers of a vital part of Jewish culture.

This was dramatized in last year's painful but exquisite memoir, *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy From the Women of Terezin*, edited by Cara DeSilva, which recounted how conversation about recipes became the spiritual thread by which so many imprisoned women held onto life.

Given this context, each of our own activities in the kitchen suddenly takes on a political tone. When I became a parent myself I was determined to make my son comfortable chopping, scraping, measuring, mixing, molding and manipulating the ingredients for our own versions of traditional holiday treats. ("This was my best brisket ever!" he declared last Passover at the age of eight.)

My kitchen has also taken on the scents of another cultural and academic trend: the reprioritizing of minority cultures. My son's Hebrew school actually has incorporated a "Culture Through Cooking" elective, with this special twist: Every week, the students recreate

recipes from Jewish communities that have been destroyed, dispersed or greatly diminished in size. As a result, our own kitchen has become as redolent with the aromas of the curried chicken of the Cochin Jews, Jewish Thai fried rice, and the date-and-cinammon-scented eggs of the Jews of Persia as of the Ashkenazic dishes I grew up with. And, as these Jewish communities adapted their recipes to their circumstances, so too have we adapted all these recipes to our own heart-healthy, no-schmaltz end-of-the-century Jewish-American taste.

Just as significantly, perhaps, my son is forming his own recipe for what it

means to be a Jew, not just in Hebrew school or in the synagogue, but in the day-to-day details of his life and in the workings of his memory. In earlier generations, this handing down and molding of tradition would have been automatic. But as American Jews have become more assimilated and intermarried, it has become more difficult to identify any common links beyond the aromas from our childhood kitchens.

How else to explain this season's extraordinary bounty of kosher cookbooks, cooking memoirs, and cookbooks-cum-cultural-histoires? Their popularity comes at a time when for



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many women sitting down to a home-cooked meal has become something to read about, dream about, or make part of a Rosh Hashanah resolution.

So strong is the connection in Judaism between food and spirituality that in *Miriam's Kitchen: A Memoir*, journalist Elizabeth Ehrlich charts, in journal form, her odyssey from assimilated secular Jew to observant Jew. Only after marrying a man who had grown up in Israel, the son of Holocaust survivors, and after she had become a mother herself, did Ehrlich realize that if she wished to give her children the secure sense of belonging that her husband and in-laws possessed, she first had to come to grips with her own inchoate Jewish identity. Her mother-in-law—not a rabbi or a Jewish institution—becomes the transmitter of tradition. She writes of the lessons learned in the kitchen, “I daily reaffirm identity, purpose, and rhythm.”

A common theme in many of these books is a rediscovery of Jewish identity through food. James Beard Award-winner Marlene Sorosky came close to refusing to write her latest volume, *Fast & Festive Meals for the Jewish Holidays*, because of her memories of growing up under the thumb of a “tyrannical, Orthodox father and a mother who bent to his every religious desire.” Yet through her friendship with the two women who help her write this book, Sorosky kindled a warmth for Judaism she had never felt before. Testing these recipes, she writes, “was like celebrating each holiday for the first time.

Veteran kosher cookbook writer Betty Goldberg suggests a similar spiritual path for the intermarried. She writes on page one of her new book, *Traditional Jewish Cooking*, that “traditional Jewish cooking provides a delicious pathway for a non-Jewish partner or recent convert to Judaism to understand the connections between Jewish holidays and Jewish foods.”

In contrast to these weighty views comes Nancy Ring's charming memoir of her life as a pastry chef in the frenetic world of trendy New York restaurants. *Walking on Walnuts* is as light as the confections—updated from the kitchens of various female relatives—she shares with us. She doesn't need to think about how her Jewish heritage affects her. She simply knows. She knows that professionally, as well as personally, she is a product of genera-

tions of hard-working Jewish women. And she knows that she has found her signature style when she invents her own take on the family rugelach, with figs and sun-dried cranberries.

Finally, when it comes to delineating Jewish culture through our cooking, I have saved the best book for last: Claudia Roden's exquisitely comprehensive and deliciously presented hybrid, a tantalizing cookbook, cultural history and personal memoir intertwined in *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey From Samarkand to New York*. On one level, this is a loving compilation of more than 800 Jewish recipes from all over the world. But as impressive as her research is, Roden's achievement is in placing the cuisine of each of these communities within the multiple contexts of Jewish history, religious life and immigration patterns, not to mention the social and culinary influences of the countries where Jews have lived. Roden writes that particular dishes form “a link with the past, a celebration of roots, a symbol of continuity. They are that part of an immigrant culture which survives the longest, kept up even when clothing, music, language, and religious observance have been abandoned.”

Roden traces her own Jewish and culinary roots from her home in London back to Cairo, where she grew up, still further back to Aleppo, Syria, where her father and his family originated, and still further back to the Jewish traders from Medieval Venice who carried spices between East and West and the Jews who inhabited Syria in biblical times.

“The dishes of my aunt Latifa and her cook Nessim were the traditional ones of Jewish Syria. . . . On Thursday night there was always lentil soup, *rishta bi ats* (homemade tagliatelle with brown lentils), or *rishta wa calsones* (tagliatelle and ravioli stuffed with cheese) and fried fish. On Friday night there was chicken or veal sofrito with little fried potatoes cooked in the sauce under the chicken *kobeba* and rice with pine nuts and pistachios.” She makes clear the connection between cooking and culture when she informs us that today those “dishes are what we get when we visit our families in Los Angeles, Mexico, Colombia, Paris, and Geneva.” ■

*Diane Cole is the author, most recently, of the memoir After Great Pain: A New Life Emerges.*

## Among the bounty of recent Jewish and kosher cookbooks:

*Miriam's Kitchen: A Memoir*, by Elizabeth Ehrlich (Viking, \$24.95, 370 pp.)

*Traditional Jewish Cooking*, by Betty S. Goldberg (Jonathan David Publisher, \$22, 427 pp.)

*Everyday Cooking for the Jewish Home: More Than 350 Delectable Recipes*, by Ethel G. Hofman (HarperCollins, \$25, 393 pp.)

*Secrets of Fat-Free Kosher Cooking: Over 150 Lowfat and Fat-Free Traditional and Contemporary Recipes—From Matzoh Balls to Kugel*, by Deborah Bernstein (Avery, \$14.95, 153 pp.)

*Mama Cooks California Style: New Twists on Jewish Classics*, compiled by the Jewish Home for the Aging of Los Angeles (\$23.95, 277 pp.)

*The Great Chefs of America Cook Kosher: Over 175 Recipes From America's Greatest Restaurants*, edited by Roth Madoff and Idee Schoenheimer (Zeitell Media Enterprises, \$36, 180 pp.)

*The World of Jewish Cooking: More Than 300 Traditional Recipes From Alsace to Yemen*, by Gil Marks (Simon & Schuster, \$30, 406 pp.)

*Grandma Doralee Patinkin's Jewish Family Cookbook: More than 150 Treasured Recipes From My Kitchen to Yours*, by Doralee Patinkin Rubin, with an introduction by her son Mandy Patinkin (St. Martin's Press, \$23.95, 240 pp.)

*Walking on Walnuts: My Grandmother's Recipes for Rugelach, Romance, and Surviving in the Real World*, written and illustrated by Nancy Ring (Bantam, \$12.95, 352 pp.)

*The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand to New York*, by Claudia Roden (Knopf, \$35, 668 pp.)

*Memories From a Russian Kitchen: From Shtetl to Golden Land*, compiled and edited by Rosalie Sogolow (Fithian Press, \$25, 272 pp.)

*Fast and Festive Meals for the Jewish Holidays*, by Marlene Sorosky (Morrow, \$27, 223 pp.)

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by Eleanor J. Bader

## Sister Brother: Gertrude & Leo Stein

by Brenda Wineapple  
G.P. Putnam's Sons, \$35

## Gertrude Stein's America

by Gertrude Stein,  
edited by Gilbert A. Harrison  
W.W. Norton and Co. Inc., \$10 paperback

Among the writers, painters and intellectuals who made Paris their home in the first part of the 20th century, Gertrude and Leo Stein were at the hub. Assimilated American Jews, and siblings, they are also at the heart of Brenda Wineapple's exhaustively researched *Sister Brother*. "They bought pictures, not lavishly, but with pre-science and true passion, and soon their apartment was a fulcrum for the movement known as modernism," Wineapple writes.

Thanks to a trust fund managed by their oldest brother, the two were able to savor what Wineapple calls "the privilege of a sufficiently financed life."

Leo, an intellectual dilettante who had dabbled in biology, law and literature, went to Paris at the turn of the century and took up painting and drawing. He quickly realized, however, that his inclinations lay less in his own artistry than in the appreciation of others'. Having dropped out of medical school, Gertrude arrived in 1903, eager to be swept up in the movements that had captured her brother's imagination. She was also ready to come out as a lesbian.

Gertrude and Leo loved nothing more than a house full of guests debating the latest trends and ideas. From the "new woman" to psychoanalysis to nutritional fads to Cubism, Wineapple presents a

house rattling with argument and laughter. Yet she is also attentive to the dynamics undergirding the Steins' relationships.

The Steins of Wineapple's book are a complex clan riddled with resentments. Leo was withdrawn and afraid of confrontation, torn apart by sexual inadequacies and immense jealousies. He reportedly found it excruciating to commit his thoughts to paper, instead spending hours brooding, fasting and in meditation. By contrast, Gertrude had come into her own by 1910. Not only was she in a loving relationship with Alice B.

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Gertrude Stein severed relations with more than one sibling, most of her family, and many friends, old and new.

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Toklas, but her writing—long ignored by publishers—was finally being lauded in the literary community. Unlike Leo, who rarely expressed his feelings, Gertrude was given to condescension toward family and friends and regularly cut people out of her life. In fact, "she severed relations with more than one sibling and most of her family, banishing old and some new friends with a peremptoriness both startling and bold."

But none of the schisms was as abrupt—or as devastating—as the one between Gertrude and Leo. The reasons for the break are not clear, but Wineapple posits a number of contributing factors, from the pair's continuous but unspoken competition to Gertrude's "defection"—

over Leo's objections—to the new work of the prolific and sexually vital Picasso. Gertrude and Leo—once so inseparable that many had suspected incest—never spoke after 1914. Gertrude died in 1946, Leo in 1947.

Wineapple's research reveals a world of upper-class pretensions co-existing with bohemian sensibilities, a world where assimilation was perceived as a necessity and religious observance a relic of the past. Many considered Toklas anti-Semitic and were not surprised when this American-born Jew converted to Roman Catholicism in 1957. But Gertrude was different; for her, Judaism was a given. Indeed, it was Stein's outsider status—as a woman, a lesbian, and an expatriate American Jew—that encouraged her muse.

"Everybody, that is, everybody who writes, is interested in living inside them-



FROM SISTER BROTHER: GERTRUDE AND LEO STEIN

selves in order to tell what is inside themselves. That is why writers have to have two countries, the one where they belong and the one in which they really live," she wrote in *Gertrude Stein's America*, a recently re-released collection of well-edited excerpts about American identity and an excellent companion to *Sister Brother*. "The second one is romantic, it is separate from themselves, it is not real but it is really there." ■

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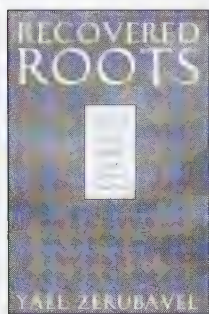
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# Where Zionism and Feminism Connect

by Marla Brettschneider

## Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition

by Yael Zerubavel  
University of Chicago Press,  
\$32.50, \$19.95 paperback



We are living in an era when national stories are being critiqued as mythic, even as lies. As a people in history, Jews are not immune. The stale icon of the normative Jew—male, middle-class, hetero-

sexual, married to a Jewish woman, synagogue- and institutionally affiliated—is crumbling, revealing a vibrant diversity.

Israeli Jews are facing a similar realignment. The process of collective memory-making, common during the formative years of the State, is becoming a contested arena. Yael Zerubavel joins the growing ranks of scholars involved in deconstructing classic Zionist memory. She is among those who not only take for granted that “any tradition is socially constructed,” but seek to demonstrate how various aspects of time-honored Israeli traditions were developed in relation to specific political aspirations.

In her latest work, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Zerubavel gives us a theory of memory construction through thorough Israeli case studies. Winner of the 1996 Salo Baron Prize of the American Academy for Jewish Research, *Recovered Roots* offers a sharp analysis of three events in the history of Israel to show how Zionists reclaimed each occurrence as part of the construction of a new Israeli national identity: the siege of Tel Hai in 1920; the Bar Kokhba Revolt of 132-135; and the fall of Masada in 73. In unpacking these cases, Zerubavel shows how their representation and commemoration helped to congeal core aspects of Zionist identity.

In each of these events, Jewish armed resistance ended in Jewish mass death. But in the Zionist retelling, they are transformed to bolster a story of the new Hebrews, uncompromising and intransi-

gent, a strong if besieged few against many. As heroic legends they also reinforce the nationalist notion attributed to Joseph Trumpeldor after the massacre at Tel Hai, that “it is good to die for one’s country.”

LILITH readers will be struck by the absence of feminist analysis in *Recovered Roots*. Some of the more obvious questions

## Challenging the notion of national memory; projecting a more pluralistic future for Israel

to be asked are: Where are the women? Why doesn’t Zerubavel question Zionism’s militarism? How does the gendering of the new Israeli Jew as a courageous, militarily-adept man affect the Israeli national consciousness? How could a critical analysis of normative heterosexuality offer us new insight into the field of Israeli history?

These lacunae noted, Jewish feminists do have much to learn from this challenge to the notion that the creation of national memory is a natural, and not a political, process. Zerubavel offers a well-done study of the purposeful collaboration of “educators, writers, politicians, ordinary settlers, and Hebrew youth” in developing a particularly Zionist memory. This is very much what the Jewish femi-

nist project is up to itself. Jewish feminists are uncovering the difference between law and custom, necessity and power, history and legend. Out of our own experiences and in the gaps, lapses, silences and contradictions, Jewish feminists are recovering certain aspects of Jewish possibility and stepping affirmatively into the communal process of making ourselves into a people in time.

As *Recovered Roots* discusses the fissures emerging in the standard story of Zionist memory, Jewish feminists will find certain parallels. Zerubavel does not seek the demise of the Jewish people, but a more democratic Israel. She writes, “The multiplicity of texts and the debates on the past indicate that contemporary Israeli culture has become more pluralistic and that Israelis display a greater readiness to examine critically the essence of their collective identity and multiple roots.” Jewish feminists would be glad to say such a thing of the Jewish people as well. ■

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# Five Women Emerge From the Shadows of Their "Great Men"

by Sarah Blustein

When history discovered Oskar Schindler, a man credited with rescuing 1,200 Jewish lives from the Holocaust, his life was feted with a best-selling novel, a blockbuster film and innumerable posthumous honors, all of which wrote him into a good long stretch of history.

In this fanfare, however, something — and someone — has been lost. "Oskar Schindler was bathed in all the light that history accorded him, and I feel that is not entirely fair," writes his wife in a quiet new memoir offered up to set the record straight. "Steven Spielberg's film, Thomas Keneally's book, and all the rivers of ink spilled fifty years after the facts depict my husband as a hero for this century. This is not true."

In her book, **Emilie Schindler**, now 90 and living in Argentina where she settled after the war, launches into a version of the

story less savory than previous accounts. She tells of a boldly unfaithful husband, a man more hapless than heroic, and his desertion of her, penniless, after the war. She tells the story of her own role in

the saving of the "*Schindler Juden*," not omitting the moments of her own heroism. She does not reject her husband, though she writes that she has both hated and loved him.

"I have lived by his side and under his shadow, but I had my own light. . . . I know that the decision to write my memoir means I have to immerse myself again in the shadows, though this time in the hope of finding the light again, of making my peace with the world, with history, with the truth. To be Emilie again, simply Emilie."

In *Writing a Woman's Life*, Carolyn Heilbrun marked the watershed in women's autobiography as 1973, when writer May Sarton "deliberately retold the record of her anger."

Twenty-five years later we reach a season saturated with these angry texts. Intersecting with the memoir's current popularity as talk-show material, and with the scholarly drive to recover women's lives, four memoirs have appeared this year alongside Schindler's, written by women

## Can you match these pairs?

|                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Claire Bloom      | Saul Bellow           |
| Adele Mailer      | Isaac Bashevis Singer |
| Emilie Schindler  | Philip Roth           |
| Devorah Telushkin | Oskar Schindler       |
| Harriet Wasserman | Norman Mailer         |

whose fates were linked to famous Jewish male writers: Philip Roth, Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow and Isaac Bashevis Singer. Written by two wives, an agent and an aide, respectively, these books reflect each woman's anger at having sacrificed so much of herself to the overwhelming needs of her more famous man.

But these stories are not of anger alone. They also echo Emilie Schindler's impulse to reclaim her own story. They record each woman's loss of self in the shadow of a narcissistic partner, and her reclamation of a place in history, both as helpmeet and in her own right. Adele Mailer concludes in her very last line, "I chose to live and learn to love myself again"; Claire Bloom declares at the end of her saga of life with Philip Roth, "Now begins the rest of my life."

What marks these many examples of women-on-men memoirs is their psychotherapeutic orientation. The author, in each case, is seeking to understand *her* motives and *her* trajectory through a disempowering and miserable relationship. Unlike angry women's memoirs and fiction of 20 years ago, they make no attempt at social analysis. For better or for worse, they acknowledge no collective experience and seek no collective solution.

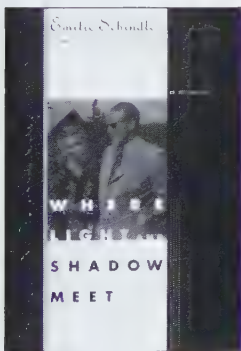
That is left for us to do. These five mem-

oirs follow eerily similar arcs, often from the author's naive but restless youth to her link, years later, with a man who sweeps her off her feet. For her, he is strong, confident, encouraging — paternal *and* romantic. He is also promiscuous, suspicious, dependent — very like a child. Throughout, she also vacillates between two impulses — a child's dependence and a mother's protectiveness — which keep her focused, even in retrospect, on him rather than on herself. At each book's climax, when he abandons her abruptly, she is still casting around wildly for whatever weak twigs remain to keep the structure standing. It will take years for her to move away enough to tell her own story.

Tracing each book through this arc, I find the story of a woman giving up power and, later, flexing new muscles. At times these muscles are applied well, wrestling the past into present use; at other times, they are used merely to strike a regressive blow. I write of them here from most savory to least, in hopes that the sympathetic threads of the former will hold the latter in tow.

The rumors of Oskar Schindler's infidelities are not hidden in Thomas Keneally's otherwise worshipful book. But the details Emilie Schindler provides in *Where Light and Shadow Meet* (W. W. Norton & Company) are stunning: Oskar keeping a mistress in his home while Emilie is away; Oskar enlisting the help of the couple's friends in arranging his liaisons; Oskar asking his wife to speak to an angry mistress on his behalf; and Oskar buying *three* tickets when the Schindlers escaped Europe for Argentina: one for Oskar, one for Emilie, and one for his Jewish mistress Gisa.

Emilie, in a deeply reflective book that traces her life from childhood to old age, admits her husband's seductive powers. Indeed, they are the same charming qualities that drew her to him when, as a young woman living restlessly on the family farm, she first saw him. "I always felt his deep blue eyes caressing me," she writes of their courtship. "It was a virile look, dark and penetrating, that I could not get out of my mind for days."



What is shocking, in her tale, is how long this seduction would last. Now, at 90, she recalls her thoughts traveling to Argentina, her husband and his mistress in tow: "As absurd as it may seem, I clung to the hope that once in Argentina, I would again be Oskar Schindler's only woman."

In the end, Oskar returned to Germany to collect reparations for property lost during the war. Emilie was left to work their ten-acre farm alone, sickly, with no income, a million pesos in debt. Wrote Oskar from Germany, "My dear Emilie . . . I am gaining weight every day eating a lot of lobster and drinking a lot of good wine." It's a much older Emilie who wonders at his behavior, and at her own dogged devotion, "Why such cruelty? I never did understand him. . . . Only God knows how often I tried."

The injustices here, however, are not only marital. History — in the sculpting hands of Keneally and Schindler — has neglected Emilie's public role. When Schindler's original enamelware factory was closed down, permission was needed from local authorities to reopen in a munitions factory in Brunnitz. "If the permit was not granted, Oskar would be sent to the front and the Jews would be murdered," Emilie recalls. It was Emilie who negotiated for the permit. It was also Emilie who, watching the workers starve, risked her life to arrange for the limitless supply of grain from a local aristocratic lady.

These scenes appear neither in book nor film. They are brought to light here by Emilie Schindler, perhaps in part to remove a laurel from the head of "a hero for our century." But the project is not only about public vindication. It is also about her acknowledging her own responsibility for the tragedy of their marriage, and her return to being "Emilie, simply Emilie." One feels that her writing of this sometimes lyrical book has been a remarkable journey, one in which, for the first time, she has been able to see herself purely through her own narrative.

"Emilie turned out better than I had thought, after all," she writes about the process of revisiting her past. "I often feared that when getting to the last chapter of my memoirs, everything would be colored by some of the bitterness and despair of farewells. But that's not the way it is. . . . To reencounter the hardworking Emilie . . . helped make me realize that, in spite of all my mistakes, my life has not been in vain."

This book indeed reflects Emilie's light, and no shadow of anger or betrayal darkens its glow.

"There were three female archetypes in [Isaac Bashevis Singer's] novels and stories. The devoted wife, the fiery lover, and the innocent girl," writes **Devorah Telushkin** in her



new book, *Master of Dreams: A Memoir of Isaac Bashevis Singer* (William Morrow & Company, Inc.). "Very often there is an untimely death for the young and innocent girl. . . . Isaac is killing off the young girls while they still have their innocence, making sure that they die before they will ever have the chance to grow up and betray."

These words are written with an unwarranted dispassion. Telushkin began working as Singer's right hand, first as a secretary, later as editor and translator, when she was in her 20s — one of the very innocents he so adored. He cannot prevent her from growing older, as he does in his fiction, but he does his damndest to stave off the betrayal.

"Promise me on your mother's grave," she recalls his saying, "'that you will never leave me even if I will become old and senile, that you will never take another job.' I promised. . . . I promised everything." It's a lot for a young woman to promise.

But it was not only selfless loyalty that kept this aspiring writer so close to Singer, whom she met when, auditing a class he was teaching at Bard College in 1975, she offered to drive him every week. Singer dangled before her the possibility of her greatness. "I am only trying to prevent you from being a nobody," he tells her. She concurred, recalling that she "considered him a way to retrieve an unseen and dormant chamber within my soul." She also bought his caveat: "No matter what you will do! No matter what you will accomplish in your lifetime. They will always say, 'It's because she works for Isaac Singer.'"

During the 16 years they worked

together, Telushkin divorced, remarried, began her own career as a story-teller, had a child. None of this appears in the book, so focused on Singer is she. The child in fact, arises only because Singer did not want her to bear it. "Was it fair of me," Telushkin wonders to herself, "to have a child if Isaac felt so imposed upon? If our work had been so compromised?"

How could a talented young woman endure such an overwhelming relationship long past the insecurities of her younger years? Clearly, despite Singer's efforts, she could not, and the dramatic tension in this warm and honest book comes from this struggle: between his powerful, infantilizing desires, and the inexorable press of time and maturation on a young woman.

In her developing confidence, a year after she begins to work for Singer, Telushkin asks for a raise. "You are beginning to behave like a man, not like a woman at all," Singer reprimands her. "In all these years you behaved in the right way. You behaved just like a secretary. And this is how it should remain." Around the same time, he also shouts at her for wearing lace stockings, calling them an "abomination" and demanding she change. "I'm not a child anymore. I can wear whatever I want to . . . I've grown up," she fights back. His retort: "Tell me! What did you need with so much growing?"

Indeed this tug-of-war takes place in Telushkin's own heart as she is torn between maintaining their mutual dependence and knowing that she has to break free. Perhaps it is fortunate that in his last months, terri-

fied of death, Singer turned against her, calling her evil, a thief after his money, a failure as a writer. They were groundless accusations,

## The injustices here are not only marital.

but they drove a wedge between the two. Though Telushkin ends with high praise for Singer, one has to wonder whether she would have managed to write this book at all if the final betrayal had never come.

Reading **Harriet Wasserman's** memoir of her years working with Saul Bellow, no one but those who follow the ins and outs of publishing would imagine that a betrayal must have been her jumping off point. As in Telushkin's book,

*Handsome Is: Adventures With Saul Bellow* (Fromm International Publishing Corporation) is replete with praise for the famous writer. Bellow's decision to leave Wasserman for a "hotter" agent, after 25 years working together, receives no mention until the last 20 pages.

But Wasserman's devotion, like Telushkin's, is complicated, a hybrid between a daughter's adoration, a mother's protectiveness and a sometimes jealous lover's passion. Her daughter-like dependence started early, when she, an assistant at the Russell & Volkening literary agency, caught Bellow's eye. "When Saul told Henry [Volkening], 'she's got something there,'" Wasserman recalls of the spark that started a nearly career-long relationship, "it became a call for me to rise to his expectations. That was the basis of a lot of my feelings for him."

As their relationship developed and got past the initial sexual stirrings, Wasserman records Bellow's increasing dependence on her in both literary and personal ways. Perhaps the least attractive feature in Wasserman's book is the mothering possessiveness with



which she tries to prove her sympathetic heart. "People who don't know Saul well usually think he's very self-possessed, very self-assured. But for Saul, every book is his first book, and he is always the first time writer welcoming reinforcement." There's nothing suspect about these empathetic words, until you consider that at the time of writing, author and agent no longer speak. She's the last person to trust for an innocent reading of the man.

Indeed, her comments are about as innocent as those of a lover spurned. By the time an emissary tells Wasserman that she's "officially terminated," we've read nearly two hundred pages on her unending loyalty. Like Schindler and Telushkin, she's told the story of her contributions to the work and life of this great but difficult man. Unlike Schindler and Telushkin, she hasn't grown past it. When the axe finally falls, we are to understand that a martyr has been made.

Claire Bloom, in *Leaving a Doll's House: A Memoir* (Little, Brown), momentarily captures our sympathies as she recalls the outrageous demands of her husband-to-be, Philip Roth: Bloom must ask her daughter to move out or Roth will be gone.

But even the most kindhearted reader hardens when we hear Bloom's choice: "It was the choice between the security of a companion and the welfare of a daughter. Anna [her daughter] was asked to move out. She was eighteen." Bloom's explanations — "I wanted desperately to keep what I knew could be the first complete relationship of my life," "I was unable to oppose him" — must fall on deaf ears. Whatever else she might tell us about the cold-hearted manipulations of her former husband, Bloom has lost the right to complain.

Caught in Roth's increasingly dramatic

mood swings, Bloom soon finds herself jumping through impossible configurations of hoops, trying to cope with his "need to escape from a woman at the moment when he realizes his affection makes him vulnerable to her." Bloom's response? Like a good-natured dog, she cooperates. She sneaks around behind Roth's back to see her daughter; she agrees to move out of their home while he works through his depression; she signs an agreement two days before the wedding granting her nothing in case of divorce. "So committed was I at this point to becoming Philip's wife, I accepted the insult offered, and chose to ignore it. I know that had I objected, there

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## DAUGHTERS OF KINGS: *Growing Up as a Jewish Woman in America* edited by Leslie Brody

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would have been no marriage."

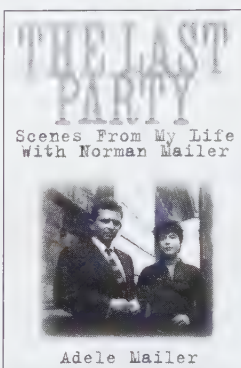
In the end, there was hardly a marriage at all. As the relationship deteriorated into divorce, Bloom records how Roth focused his depression and fury on her, demanding repayment for everything from household expenses to "\$150 per hour for the 'five or six hundred hours' he had spent going over scripts with me." And she recalls meeting, sympathetically, with the lover who replaced her, "a friend who had been so cruelly coerced by my husband."

Bloom has clearly spent the three years since the couple's break-up trying to understand how she could have been so thoroughly acquiescent. She wonders whether she would ever break her life-long patterns of dependence and she ends by rejecting the man who had been "the custodian of my heart and mind." Whatever we think of Bloom's choice to hand herself over to a "custodian," I think we must at least recognize the strength it took to retrieve it.

The same might be said for **Adele Mailer**, whose memoir *The Last Party: Scenes From My Life With Norman Mailer* (Barricade Books), recalls the couple's turbulent years together.

Adele Mailer's report is a shameless, terribly written tell-all, in which the tales of bohemian 1950s literary life, orgies, drugs and alcohol are put to no greater narrative use than shock value, drawing its readership no doubt from the name "Mailer" that appears twice on the spine. However misguided her efforts, though, even Adele was praying to a larger god than the Tabloid. She writes of her emotions in 1953 — nine years before he would stab her and their relationship would end, "I was becoming less clear about who I was. . . . With Norman, most people were an extension of that all encompassing ego."

So strong was his public draw that as she lay in a hospital bed, stabbed just near her heart by her drunken husband, "so-called intellectuals and writers" waved a petition under her nose asking her to help them protect Mailer from the "tragedy."



As with all our other subjects, Adele too recalls her child-like dependence — even on the morning when Mailer announced he had been keeping a mistress for the past year. "I felt fear, the same fear, that same lostness I had as a child. Despite everything going on with what had

been passing as a marriage, I still lived in that terrible fear of being left alone."

What can we make of this "terrible fear of being left alone" that in each of these cases bound a woman to a clearly unhappy relationship? What can we make of her willingness to put herself in the service of a man — albeit a great one — at her own expense?

"It isn't healthy to live or work with a world-renowned figure unless one is active and absorbed in one's own life," reflected Telushkin. Without another focus, the famous man's world "begins to sap the existence and energy of the second person. One even lives with the illusion that the great man's success is [her] own."

But it's not only fame that draws them in. Theirs are exaggerated versions of many women's lives, and they reflect the cultural imperative that even today, a quarter-century after the feminist movement peaked in this country, demands that a woman put herself second. The consciousness that inspired women two and three decades ago to write angrily of their lives in hopes of changing *society* is not present in these books. They are not politically motivated, nor are the writers concerned with the larger significance of their stories. Indeed, these women are *not* models for the next century. Their growing took much too long. But as I watched them stepping out of the shadows, I was impressed with the courage they showed in revisiting pain and sharing it with others.

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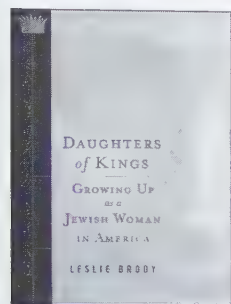
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## Daughters of Kings: Growing Up as a Jewish Woman in America

edited by Leslie Brody  
Faber and Faber, \$26.95



Belying its subtitle, *Daughters of Kings* contains many stories of growing up as a non-Jewish woman in America, five out of the 14, to be precise. Nonetheless, the collection of essays by Jewish women, black women, WASP women, Southern women, a convert to Judaism, and partners in various permutations of intermarriage, makes for a compelling read on the messages about Jews and Jewishness these women received as they came of age.

Certain themes run through the pieces by non-Jews: being invited to lavish bar mitzvah banquets and top-notch Jewish fraternity parties; the ambient belief that while many Jews were killed in Europe, they're rich and powerful here in America; and recollections of Jewish women as assertive and forthright. Nancy A. Jones, evoking her WASPy Indiana girlhood, remembers a Jewish friend's grandmother's "assertive, spirited manner of speaking" (as well as her heavy bracelets and canasta games). Karen Fraser Wyche, an African-American woman, muses that "Jewish women and men seem so confident and strong. How surprised I was to hear about ambivalence regarding Jewish identity."

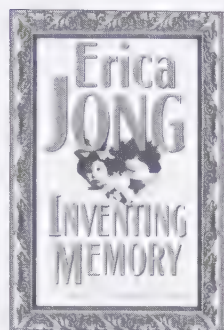
Yet ambivalence there certainly is for the Jewish writers in this book. How Jewish is it okay to be when you're the only Jew in an all-girls Episcopalian boarding school? How Jewish are you if your mother is a German half-Jew married to the son of Anglican clerics? How can a granddaughter of Holocaust survivors trust her non-Jewish friends and still maintain a list of countries to flee to should America ever turn against the Jews?

The strength of this collection, which grew out of discussions at Radcliffe College's Bunting Institute, where each contributor was a Fellow, lies not in the well-trodden territory of its subject matter, but rather in the details of memory and the thoughtfulness that guide us over familiar ground.

—Karen Prager Kramer

## Inventing Memory: A Novel of Mothers and Daughters

by Erica Jong  
HarperCollins, \$25



Like two mirrors facing each other, *Inventing Memory* repeats itself, frame within frame, story within story. The material Jong's narrator turns up as she researches the generations of Jewish women in her family becomes the very substance of Jong's novel. "I've become passionate about the history of the Jews . . . particularly the stories of the women in these families," says Sara. "I would like nothing better than to rescue them from oblivion."

With the characteristic blend of sex and rebellion that brought the world *Fear of Flying*, Jong aims to create archetypal Jewish women, each representing the danger and excitement of their era. Sarah is the greenhorn in the *goldeneh medineh*; Salome, the wild literary flapper in Paris;

Sally, the folk singer destroyed by her fame; and Sara, at the millennium, piecing together the stories of those who came before her.

While Jong's strokes are at times so broad as to turn to caricature, readers will treasure the value she places on Jewish women's memories as history.

—Sarah Wallis

## Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home

by Laura Levitt  
Routledge, \$18.99

This is not a book about *all* Jews and feminism, but about one Jewish feminist in her personal and academic attempt to "reconcile the relationship between rabbinic Judaism and [the] liberalism" out of which, she presumes, modern feminism has grown. The book documents Levitt's search for both literal and metaphoric homes; literal because she was raped in her apartment when she was a graduate student in religion at Emory University, and metaphoric as she forges an academic career while "letting go of liberalism."

*Jews and Feminism* reminds me of the pleasure of leaving the Ivory Tower, filled as

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as it is with talk of "the identificatory logic of sameness within liberalism," "signifiers," and "oppositional logic." (To be fair, keep reading—you will eventually understand what Levitt is talking about.) Though packaged for general consumption, this volume can be interesting and comprehensible to only a small audience.

Still, one doesn't often see a book index with the following consecutive entries: "Their Eyes Were Watching God (Hurst) 117" and "*Tosephta* [a Talmudic term] 38-39." If you can wade through the litcrit-speak, you will find moments of reflections about the pain and discomfort of living within the academic feminist world,

where Judaism and Jewishness are at times suspect. In the final section of the book, Levitt raises questions "about [her] own faith in this country's liberal vision of emancipation for Jews and for women." Levitt's unusual perspective invited this reader to question her own assumptions about these issues, and to remember when she too felt uncomfortable as a Jew in the world of women's studies. —K.P.K.

### **Beyond the Pale**

by Elana Dykewomon  
Press Gang Publishers, \$15.95

*Beyond the Pale* is the literary equivalent of a warm kitchen, redolent with mouth-water-

ing smells and bathed in the gentle light of Shabbat candles. It speaks to the Jewish woman (this one, at least) in a profound and poignant way.

From the pogroms of Tsarist Russia to the hustle of the Lower East Side, we are swept into the lives of women who face their demons with strength and dignity, women whose hearts are as deep as the oceans they tumultuously cross. As lesbians in the 19th century, Gutke, Chaya, Rose and Dovid are women who prefer to write their own histories rather than suffocate in the chokehold of convention.

With the grace and elegance of a master composer, Dykewomon creates prose that

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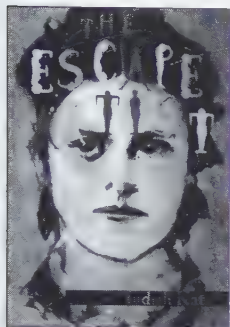
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is by turns passionate aria, soothing lullaby, joyful chant and haunting *kaddish*. Dykewomon's attention to detail is the key to the novel's credibility and beauty, its intimacy and emotion. "America is a balloon filling up with the sighs of women," she writes. The balloon expands when one thinks about turning the last page of this magnificent novel.

—Paula Margulies

## The Escape Artist

by Judith Katz  
Firebrand Books, \$12.95



Readers of *The Escape Artist* will notice that the novel is more than a story told to an unknown audience. It is one woman's gift to her lover: the tale of how their lives stretched and grew until they were woven together into a single fabric. It is a magical gift, perfumed with intrigue, humor and paradox, and wrapped with sadness and longing.

Sofia Teitelbaum, a nice Jewish girl from Poland, is lured away to Buenos Aires and tricked into a life of prostitution. As terrible as her story is, Sofia is not portrayed for our pity, and carries a provocative and intelligent edge. Hankus Lubarsky, to whom she tells her story, is also a nice Jewish girl from Poland—a girl who pretends to be male in order to work in her life's calling, as a magician and acrobat. When Sofia and Hankus fall in love, their attempts to walk the tightrope of love, freedom and independence are quickly put to the test.

The surprises in this novel arise not so much from the plot but from well-crafted characters who refuse to be pigeonholed—characters like the madam of Sofia's brothel, whose renowned sensuality is matched only by her devout religious observance: every night she lights 18 Shabbat candles, dons a *tallit* and *teffilin*, and then takes out the handcuffs.

—P. M.

## King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

by Blu Greenberg and Linda Tarry  
Pittspony Press, \$16.95

An elegantly crafted children's book, *King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* tells a story that dates back to biblical times. This rendition, updated to appeal to children from a variety of backgrounds, comes from two more-than-qualified women: Orthodox Jewish feminist Blu Greenberg and African-American, Christian activist Linda Tarry. These authors are committed to providing strong role models for Jews, Christians, African-Americans and women, and their empathetic portrayal of both protagonists in the story does exactly that.

*King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* traces the interaction between the two main characters and, symbolically, the two cultures they represent. Makeda, the Queen of Sheba, is a beautiful, charming and intelligent young woman who sets out to Solomon's kingdom to fulfill her father's command "to search for wisdom wherever it may be." To test his intelligence, Makeda presents various riddles to Solomon, each of which he answers correctly. Slowly Makeda learns that Solomon's reputation for wisdom is not exaggerated. (For his part, the King discovers that the rumor about

*continued on page 43*

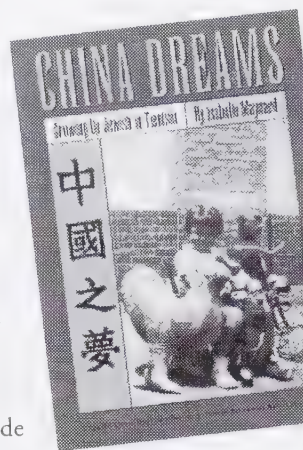
# China Dreams

## Growing Up Jewish in Tientsin

BY ISABELLE MAYNARD

"A powerful and valuable testament, not only to the China of Maynard's dreams and memory but to the people who inhabited it: the exiled and displaced as well as the privileged, the weak and frightened and the victorious."—*San Francisco Review*

*China Dreams* is a collection of autobiographical stories of an amazing childhood. Maynard's keen eye and fetching wit provide an arresting portrait of a now-vanished world once shared by thousands of European Jews. 186 pages, 10 photos. \$24.95 cloth/\$13.95 paper



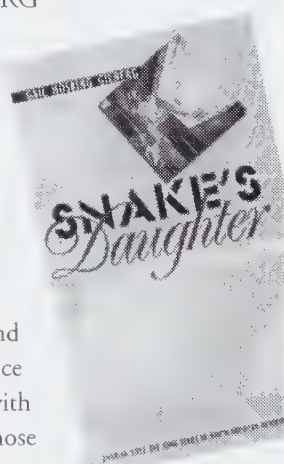
# Snake's Daughter

## The Roads in and out of War

BY GAIL HOSKING GILBERG

"A poignant memoir of loss by the daughter of a career soldier who died in Vietnam. The simple structure of this annotated photo album belies the depth of the work, shaded and shadowed with layers of meaning and sentiment."—*Kirkus Reviews*

*Snake's Daughter* is an arresting and anguished narrative that gives voice to an experience Gilberg shares with thousands of other Americans whose parents served their country and sometimes gave their lives in the process. 224 pages, 30 photos. \$32.95 cloth/\$16.95 paper



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## Books Received

A Selection From This Season's Crop

### NONFICTION

**Jewish Family and Life: Traditions, Holidays, and Values** by Yosef Abramowitz and Rabbi Susan Silverman (Golden Books, \$25).

**Black, Jewish, and Interracial: It's Not the Color of Your Skin, but the Race of Your Kin, and Other Myths of Identity** by Katya Gibel Azoulay (Duke University Press, \$45.95, \$15.95).

**Reading Bibles, Writing Bodies: Identity and the Book** edited by Timothy K. Beal and David M. Gunn (Routledge Press, \$70, \$18.99). Re-examines ethnic and gender identities constructed by their biblical context.

**The Seamstress: A Memoir of Survival** by Sara Tuvel Bernstein (Penguin Putnam Inc., \$25.95). Four women fight for survival during the Holocaust.

**Sacred Fires: Berurya: A Daughter, A Wife, But First A Woman** by Ronald Brown (Gefen Publishing House, \$24.95). A life of this pre-eminent female scholar of Talmudic times.

**Letting Go: A Parent's Guide to Understanding the College Years** by Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger (HarperPerennial, \$13).

**Letters to a Young Feminist** by Phyllis Chesler (Four Walls Eight Windows, \$18). A call-to-action to the next generation.

**Feminist Ethics and Social Policy** edited by Patrice DiQuinzio and Iris Marion Young (Indiana University Press, \$39.93, \$17.95). A wide-ranging anthology, from breast implants to the military.

**Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for Her Mother's History** by Helen Epstein (Little, Brown and Company, \$24.95). The author reconstructs her foremothers' stories from before, during and after WWII.

**Jewish Law and the New Reproductive Technologies** edited by Emanuel Feldman and Joel B. Wolowelsky (Ktav, \$29.50).

**The Death of Death: Resurrection and Immortality in Jewish Thought** by Neil Gillman (Jewish Lights Publishing, \$23.95).

**Strangers to the Tribe: Portraits of Interfaith Marriage** by Gabrielle Glaser (Houghton Mifflin Company, \$24).

**Shtetl: The Life and Death of A Small Town and the World of Polish Jews** by Eva Hoffman (Houghton Mifflin, \$25).

**Feminism and Film** by Maggie Humm (Indiana University Press, \$16.95).

**Services for Women by the Israel Women's Network** (P.O. Box 3171, Jerusalem 91031). A listing in Hebrew of social service, political and legal resources for women in Israel, with a discussion in English of Israeli law vis-a-vis women.

**Stalking Elijah: Adventures with Today's Jewish Mystical Masters** by Rodger Kamenetz (HarperCollins, \$22).

**Confronting the Loss of a Baby: A Personal and Jewish Perspective** by Rabbi Yamin Levy (Ktav, 1998, \$23).

**Keepers of the Motherland: German Texts by Jewish Women Writers** by Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (University of Nebraska Press, \$55).

**Jewish Spiritual Guidance: Finding Our Way to God** by Carol Ochs and Kerry M. Olitzky (Jossey-Bass Inc., \$23).

**Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture** by Sherry B. Ortner (Beacon Press, \$25).

**A Jump For Life: A Survivor's Journal From Nazi-Occupied Poland** by Ruth Altbeker Cyprius (The Continuum Publishing Company, \$24.50).

**Succeeding at Jewish Education: How One Synagogue Made It Work** by Joseph Reimer (The Jewish Publication Society, \$24.95). An anecdotal, ethnographic study.

**To Do and To Be: Portraits of Four Women Activists (1893-1986)** by Ann Schofield (Northeastern University Press, \$42.50, \$15.95). A comparative feminist biography of labor leaders.

**Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country** by Gillian Slovo (Little, Brown and Company, \$24.95). A woman re-examines her parents' anti-Apartheid activism.

**Fruits of Sorrow: The Use and Abuse of Suffering** by Elizabeth V. Spelman (Beacon, \$24). A philosophical exploration, from Aristotle to slavery to AIDS.

**My Years in Theresienstadt: How One Woman Survived the Holocaust** by Gerty Spies (Prometheus Books, \$26.95).

**Writes of Passage ... Every Woman Has a Story!** by Daryl Ott Underhill (In Any Event, Inc., \$14.95). An anthology by women about women.

**Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women by Virginia Valian** (The MIT Press, \$30). Draws on psychology, sociology, economics and biology to explain the lag in women's power and prestige.

**Reading Faces: Window to the Soul?** by Leslie Zebrowitz (Westview Press/HarperCollins, \$22). What information can faces provide?

### FICTION

**High Holiday Sutra** by Allan Appel (Coffee House Press, \$13.95). A Buddhist-Jewish love story.

**The Bonding of Isaac: Stories and Essays about Gender and Jewish Spirituality** by Joel Lurie Grishaver (Alef Design Group, \$21.95). Creative midrash.

**Lover, Traitor: A Jerusalem Story** by Anna Mitgutsch (Metropolitan Books, \$23). A half-Jewish Austrian woman falls in love with the wrong man during the *Intifada*.

**Out of the Closet and Nothing to Wear** by Leslea Newman (Alyson Books, \$10.95). Fictional comedy/adventures based on the author's columns in gay and lesbian periodicals.

**The Secret Book of Grazia dei Rossi** by Jacqueline Park (Simon & Schuster, \$25). Set in the High Renaissance, a romance between an heiress to a Jewish banking dynasty and her Christian lover.

### POETRY

**Divine Honors** by Hilda Raz (Wesleyan University Press, \$25, \$11.95). A breast cancer series.

**Wild Light** by Yona Wallach, translated from Hebrew by Linda Zisquit (The Sheep Meadow Press, \$12.95). Struggles with Judaism and Hebrew.

**Breathing Like a Jew** by Florence Weinberger (Chicory Blue Press, \$10).

**Unopened Letters: Poems by Linda Zisquit** (The Sheep Meadow Press, \$12.95).

continued from page 41

Makeda having goat feet is unfounded.)

The characters' initial suspicion of each other dissipates as their encounter results in increased understanding and mutual appreciation. The story also introduces Judaism in a non-judgemental yet compelling fashion. After hearing the stories of Abraham's acceptance of one God and the Jewish Exodus from Egypt, the Queen of Sheba resolves, "I must share with the people of Sheba the lessons I have learned from you." The authors' portrayal of this mutually enriching relationship can serve as a wonderful tool for teaching children about respecting different cultures.

—Avlana Eisenberg

Eleanor J. Bader is a writer and teacher from Brooklyn, NY.

Marla Brettschneider is an assistant professor of political philosophy at the University of New Hampshire. Her publications include *Cornerstones of Peace: Jewish Identity Politics and Democratic Theory*, and *The Narrow Bridge: Jewish Views on Multiculturalism*, with a forward by Cornel West.

Karen Prager Kramer, a former *Lilith* intern, is a writer living in New Jersey.

Paula Margulies, a former *Lilith* intern, is a student at Cornell University.

Sarah Wallis, a former *Lilith* intern, is living in San Francisco, working at *Borders books*, and creating a history of the women in her family.

## A New Book of History

With more than 900 entries, the newly published *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* marks the consolidation of the notable biographies into a single, diverse unit. And with more than 600 editors, contributors and advisers, it also documents the existence of a community of women and men vigorously involved in exploring the lives of Jewish women.

Edited by professors Paula Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore and published by Routledge (1,500 pp., \$250), the encyclopedia includes entries on Zionist leaders, publishers, philanthropists, labor activists, cowgirls, sports figures and many others. There's a lot of original research in each nugget of an entry. *LILITH*, of course, is included in an entry by Ann Lapidus Lerner.

"We understood that knowledge empowers," wrote the editors, "and we sought to give this and coming generations of women the tools to participate in designing their future."

# WHY SO SLOW?

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"This is a very valuable book, as a resource, as a source of insight and understanding, and as a good read. It stands on the solid ground of social science research, yet opens that research up to the critical questions of gender and society."

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"Valian provides insights and remedies that, over time, may help us all to achieve the equality for which we have been striving for so long."

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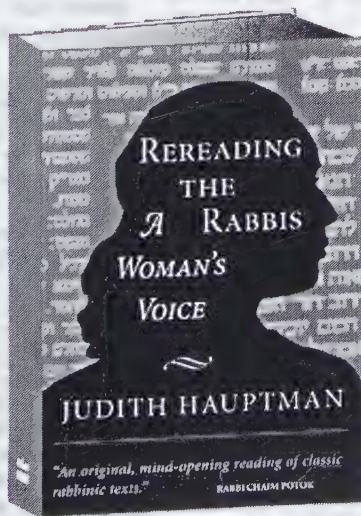
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## NON-SEXIST LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

**Myra Sadker Day**, March 5, 1998, will initiate a national effort by a corps of volunteers, to break the gender barriers that inhibit both females and males. Myra Pollack Sadker (1943-1995) pioneered much of the research documenting gender bias in American education from elementary through graduate school. A list of more than 101 suggestions such as "try an activity that is non-traditional for your gender; study how religion and gender intersect in your life; award a



PHOTO: DAVID SADKER

scholarship; visit a women's college; take youngsters to a women's athletic event" is free from *Myra Sadker Advocates for Gender Equity*; 1401 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20952; (301)738-7113; fax 301-424-0474; DSadker@aol.com

**Rebecca Gratz, Lillian Wald and Molly Picon** are featured this year on posters in honor of Women's History Month (March), created by the Jewish Women's Archive and Ma'yan. Free to Jewish community centers, synagogues and schools, they may be purchased by individuals for \$10 each or \$25 for the set of three. Also available are last year's posters of Glikl of Hameln, Rose Schneiderman, and Henrietta Szold. *Ma'yan-the Jewish Women's Project*, 15 W. 65th St., New York, NY 10023; (212)580-0099; fax (212)580-9498.

**Egalitarian Holiday Posters** show a woman leading a seder, women reading Torah, and a man cleaning for Passover. Each set of 16 18x22" color posters with smaller black and white sets for students and a teacher's guide is \$100 plus postage and NY/NJ sales tax. Catalog from *Melton Research Center*, 3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027; fax (212)749-9085; [www.jtsa.edu/melton](http://www.jtsa.edu/melton)

**Gender Issues in Jewish Day Schools**, the proceedings of a 1996 Brandeis University conference, explores how to foster dialogue between boys and girls, bring women in the Bible to the center of biblical text study, and handle gender issues in the classroom. The collection of articles, workshop handouts and bibliographies, by 30 contributors, is \$12.50; bulk rates available. *Bureau of Jewish Education*, 333 Nahanton St., Newton, MA 02159-3213; (617)965-7350 x 227; fax (617)965-9776.

**Eighty Books for 21st Century Girls** is an annotated list of important books and favorite titles that provide smart, capable, talented female role models. Free from the Women's National Book Association, founded 80 years ago when women were not permitted to attend the American Booksellers Association's annual convention. (On their 75th anniversary they produced "75 Books by Women Whose Words Have Changed the World.") *WNBA*, 160 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010; (212)675-7805; <http://bookbuzz.com/wnba.htm>

**If only I were prettier, taller, thinner...then my life would be perfect.** A free brochure, "The New Me," created by Hadassah with health education students at Townsend Harris High School in New York, urges teens to "Look beyond the mirror to find the

real you." It suggests things girls can do to feel better about themselves. *Hadassah*, 50 W. 58th St., New York, NY 10019; (212)303-8094; [www.Hadassah.org](http://www.Hadassah.org).

**New Voices**, which recently published a special issue on gender, is the only national monthly publication produced by and for Jewish students. It features news and opinions on the arts, entertainment, internet, and Israel programs, and it lists jobs and internships. To receive a free one-year subscription, send your name, school address and year to *Mik Moore*, *Jewish Student Press Service*; 114 W. 26th St., #1004, New York, NY 10001; (212)675-1168; fax (212)929-3459; [jsps@panix.com](mailto:jsps@panix.com)

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## RECOVERY

**The Impact of Violence in the Lives of Working Women** includes absenteeism, reduced productivity, and hazards in the workplace. This instructive publication, designed for employers, gives policy guidelines and

## WOMEN AT PRAYER

**Celebrate your simcha with the Women of the Wall.** Preferably at their regular Rosh Hodesh davening, January 28, February 27, March 28, April 27, May 26, June 25. If possible, make your plans one month in advance by contacting *Betsy Cohen-Kallus* 011-972-2-563-3248; [bkallus@netmedia.net.il](mailto:bkallus@netmedia.net.il) If you will be in Jerusalem on these new moon dates and would like to participate get details of time and place from *Chaya Beckerman* 011-972-2-678-6416; [mscb@pluto.mscc.huji.ac.il](mailto:mscb@pluto.mscc.huji.ac.il)

**A Daily Women's Tefillah Group at Columbia University**—the only daily prayer group exclusively for women that we know of—is now entering its second year. Participants include women from all over North America and Israel, students at Barnard, Columbia and the Jewish Theological Seminary, Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, unaffiliated and unlabeled. Join them, Sundays at 9am, Monday through Friday at 8am, and Shabbat afternoon about an hour and a half before sundown at *105 Earl Hall, 117th Street and Broadway in Manhattan*; *Jewish Student Union* (212)854-5111.

**Kehillat Yedidya**, the Orthodox congregation with a commitment to egalitarianism—"essential for the religious sanity of Jerusalem" according to scholar David Hartman—meets in the Efrata School on Gad and Yehuda Streets. Your contribution (tax deductible in the US) can help them build a synagogue on a site recently acquired. Send a donor-advised check made out to the *New Israel Fund*, or *PEF-Israel*. *Kehillat Yedidya*, P.O. Box 10245, Jerusalem 91101, Israel; [yedidy@jen.co.il](mailto:yedidy@jen.co.il)

bibliographic resources. \$10 from *NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund*, 99 Hudson St., New York, NY 10013; (212)925-6635.

**Gemilah** (from the Hebrew word for recovery) is an electronic discussion group on issues relating to recovery from alcohol and drug dependency within the context of traditional Judaism. Sponsored by the Union for Traditional Judaism. Subscribe by sending an e-mail to [majordomo@utj.org](mailto:majordomo@utj.org) with the message reading *subscribe GEMILAH*

**SEND YOUR WORK**

**Skin Trading: Women, Complexion & Caste**, an anthology, will explore the significance of color-based and phenotypic social and economic hierarchies in the lives of women from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially Black, Jewish, Native American or Latina women. Submit a brief abstract of your academic or activist perspective with a bio by February 1, 1998. Articles due September. *Jhana Sen Xian*, editor, [jhana@msn.com](mailto:jhana@msn.com)

**For a book on Yiddish film**, to be published by Five Leaves, send personal or academic articles by June 1998 to *Sylvia Paskin*, *Garden Flat*, 15, *Savernake Rd.*, London, NW3 2JT, England; (0171)-284-4542; fax (0171)-482-4502.

**XX Empowered, the Magazine for Young Females** (the logo is the symbol for female chromosomes) is "about the strength, intelligence, love and power that girls have to offer." Young females are invited to send quality photos and negatives, art work, poetry, articles about topics, issues and people that interest you. *XX Empowered Magazine*, P.O. Box 1236, Colorado Springs, CO 80901; (888)TEENMAG; [www.eyf.com](http://www.eyf.com)

**Living Text: The Journal of Contemporary Midrash** is a new semi-annual journal that prints poetry, narrative, drama, art and music articles and interviews pertaining to midrash. Send submissions to: *Jill Hammer*, editor, *Living Text*, [jilhammer@jtsa.edu](mailto:jilhammer@jtsa.edu) Subscriptions are \$36 (\$18 for students) from *Living Text*, 7318 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19119.

**FEMINIST HISTORY**

**New Directions for Women**, the feminist newspaper that for 22 years provided a running account of the feminist movement, now has a Ten Year Index (1973-1981) and a Twelve Year Index (1982-1993) available for \$25 plus \$5 shipping from *Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press*, 3306 Ross Pl., NW, Washington DC 20008; (973)366-6036.

**Nominate a Heroine.** The Beijing Women of Rochester, NY, have established a project to continue — worldwide — the struggle for women's equality begun in their region 150 years ago. You may nominate "a woman who in her acts of courage gives voice to all women, and hope to all humanity." Include her name, country, contact information, nationality, date of birth, bio and personal background. Why is she a heroine in her own country? What challenges has she overcome? Include contact information for two references and for yourself as nominator. (You may nominate yourself.) Nominations, no longer than three pages, are due by February 28, 1998. Selected heroines will be notified July 30 and will be honored with a monetary award to support their continued work and be included in a book of photographic essays. *100 Heroines*, P.O. Box 23750, Rochester, NY 14692; (716)234-4292; fax (716)586-7523; [Heroine100@aol.com](mailto:Heroine100@aol.com)

**Women's History Catalog** offers special materials to enhance your 1998 celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Women's Rights Movement in the United States. Free from *The National Women's History Project*, 7738 Bell Rd., Dept. P., Windsor, CA 95492-8518; (707)838-6000; [nwhp@aol.com](mailto:nwhp@aol.com)

**Women Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union** are featured in a Hebrew-Russian-English wall calendar for 5758 produced by the Israel Women's Network and the Zionist Forum. This project aims to counteract a very negative stereotype—of involvement in crime, violence,



**Alexandra Shklar, fencer**

pornography and prostitution—that makes their integration into Israeli society especially difficult. Suggested donation \$15. *Israel Women's Network*, P.O. Box 53186, 91531 Jerusalem, Israel; (011972-2)-6718885; fax 6718887.

**TZEDAKA**

**A Family Foundation: Looking to the Future, Honoring the Past** tells the story of the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the process the children and grandchildren went through in setting foundation goals and program agendas, and the sharing of direction and control among themselves. The 64-page report will prompt questions and provide ideas for others who have recently formed a family foundation or are considering creating one. Free from *The Nathan Cummings Foundation*, 1926 Broadway, #600, New York, NY 10023; (212)787-7300; fax (212)787-7377; [www.ncf.org](http://www.ncf.org)

**Toanot Rabbaniot** are women trained to be advocates before the rabbinical courts in Israel. In Ramat Gan, a new three-year course of study in Jewish law prepares women who have already completed a university degree for a certification exam. You can support this program with a tax-deductible contribution designated for Toanot Rabbaniot Program—Midrasha Lebanot to *American Friends of Bar Ilan University*, 91 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003.

**Judaism and Socially Responsible Investing** describes projects for "your own back yard" and how to get your Jewish community involved. Brochure from *Shefa Fund*, 805 Willow Grove Ave, #2D, Philadelphia, PA 19038; (215)247-9704; fax (215)247-1015; [shefafnd@libertynet.org](mailto:shefafnd@libertynet.org)

**REUNIONS**

**Jewish feminists** held a pioneering gathering 25 years ago at the McAlpin Hotel in New York City. A reunion is planned for Feb. 22, 1998. Contact: *Shirley Frank*, 25th Year Celebration, POB 1874, Cathedral Station, NY 10025-1874; fax (212)255-7787; [SRF Writer@aol.com](mailto:SRF Writer@aol.com)

**The Orthodox Feminist Conference**, which brought together nearly 1000 women last year will meet again in New York, February 15-16 contact: (800)550-6614.

—compiled by Naomi Danis

**Corrections:**  
E-mail *Israel Social Science Research* at [logan@bgu.ac.il](mailto:logan@bgu.ac.il) for "Feminist Issues and Gender Problems in Israel."  
E-mail [jcohen@yorku.ca](mailto:jcohen@yorku.ca) about *Nice Jewish Girls*, the e-mail discussion list for Jewish lesbians and bisexual women.

# Your Jewish Women's Address Book

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### Ma'ayan: Torah Studies Initiative for Women

12 York Terrace  
Brookline, MA 02146  
(617)739-1088  
www.mayan.org  
*Advanced training for women in the study and analysis of traditional Jewish texts with such renowned Jewish scholars as Dr. Atarah Twersky and Erica Brown.*

### Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

New York Kolel  
One West Fourth  
New York, NY 10012  
(212)824-2272  
*In this progressive "Kolel" (the word means "embracing all" but traditionally refers to an Orthodox yeshiva for married men), its director explains, "All classes incorporate feminist thinking." Last year's course entitled "Our Bodies Ourselves: Female Sexuality and Judaism" was especially popular.*

### Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education

4126 Executive Drive  
La Jolla, CA 92037  
(619)442-2666  
*For 21 years these classes have explored Jewish women's roles in Talmud, Torah, art, history, sociology, archeology and other disciplines. Publications include "The Shabbat Series: Excellence in Education for Jewish Women," "The San Diego Women's Haggaddah,"*

*and "A Ceremonies Sampler: New Rites, Celebrations, and Observances of Jewish Women." Call for information about special events such as a Women's Seder, Rosh Hodesh celebrations, and creative arts workshops.*

### Chochmat Halev

2525 8th Street #13  
Berkeley, CA 94710  
(510)704-9687  
*A co-ed, egalitarian yeshiva where Jews of all backgrounds can explore traditional texts and other topics including Jewish mysticism, Hassidism and Jewish meditation. Offers free weekly meditation and chanting sessions.*

### The Institute for Contemporary Midrash

7318 Germantown Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19119  
(215)247-8655  
*Offers training programs in contemporary midrashic techniques for educators and artists, including Bibliodrama, dance, music, storytelling, writing and visual art. Distributes the semi-annual journal, Living Text: The Journal of Contemporary Midrash, and maintains an artists and scholars referral service to connect communities with presenters.*

### Jewish Community Centers Association of North America

15 E. 26th Street  
NYC 10010-1579  
(212)532-4949  
*If none of the above listings is in your community, call here to ask about local adult education programs. Many JCC's and local synagogues now have excellent adult-education programs for Jewish women.*

## ACADEMIC/PROFESSIONAL ACTIVISM

### Women's Caucus of the Association for Jewish Studies

Professor Pamela Nadell  
Jewish Studies Program  
American University  
4400 Mass Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20016  
(202)885-2425  
*A professional academic association open to male and female professors and graduate students who are interested in using gender as a prism for scholarly research.*

### Jewish Caucus of the Association for Women in Psychology (AWP)

Karen Erlichman  
4104 24th Street #262  
San Francisco, CA 94114  
(415)522-2950  
*The caucus encourages presentations with Jewish content at the AWP annual meetings and presents the Jewish Women's Caucus Award for Scholarship.*

### Jewish Caucus of the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA)

Elizabeth Ribet  
University of Maryland  
7100 Baltimore Avenue,  
Suite 301  
College Park, MD 20742  
(714)509-1431  
*The caucus' annual meeting within the NWSA Conference features such events as a feminist Shabbat service, workshops and panel discussions on reproductive health, domestic violence, gender, and Jewish religious practice. The caucus distributes a newsletter during the year and maintains a database of Jewish women scholars including areas of interest and publication information.*

## DEGREE PROGRAMS

### Women's Studies Department

MS 082-Brandeis University  
P.O. Box 9110  
Waltham, MA 02254  
(617)736-3042  
*Offers a combination Jewish Studies B.A. and Women's Studies Certificate and a joint M.A. degree in Jewish Women's Studies. Courses include: "Gender and Jewish Studies"; "Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Jews and Christians: Sources and Interpretations"; "Sotah: The Suspected Adulteress."*

### Kolot Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

1299 Church Road  
Wyncote, PA 19095  
(215)576-0800, ext.47  
*The Center for Jewish Women and Gender Studies offers a joint Master's certificate in Jewish Women's Studies with Temple University. Course offerings include: "Resources in Jewish Feminist Theology" and "Hermeneutics: Finding Theology in Jewish Women's Literature and Lives."*

### The Jewish Women's Studies M.A. Program

The Jewish Theological Seminary, 3080 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027-4649  
(212)678-8022  
*Offers an M.A. degree in Jewish Women's Studies. Requirements include courses in feminist theory, a designated area of concentration in Jewish studies, and a Master's Thesis. Course offerings include: "Women and Other Animals: The Self-image of Women in Hebrew Literature," "Lying and Deception in the Hebrew Bible," "Jewish Feminist Theology: Progress and Process."*

**Watch the next two issues of LILITH for further listings. To order the last issue, which featured Jewish women's organizations and programs around the world, call (888)2-LILITH.**



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# YAY! NOW WE CAN SING 'EM!

by Susan Schnur

There's a wonderful Hassidic saying that in heaven "the gates of *neginah* [melody] stand next to the gates of *tshuvah* [repentance]." In other words, music has the spiritual capacity to do end-runs around other, more cognitive forms of religious practice, landing us smack dab at God's kitchen table.

That said, we're excited by the release of Fran Avni and Linda Hirschhorn's new CD/cassette, "Selections from Marcia Falk's Blessings in Song" [available from Half Note Productions, phone/fax 510-654-0799], which sets to music (and brings to life) 21 important, new feminist-Jewish prayers from Marcia Falk's *The Book of Blessings*. (HarperSan Francisco, 1996). Composers/singers Avni and Hirschhorn have created exotic, textured, accessible *neginahs* on this album—energetic rounds, hypnotic chants, traditional cantorial pieces and spiritually transporting canons. Their sounds include Middle Eastern music, klezmer, women's spirituality chants, cantorial melodies and potent bits of rhythm and syncopation.

Feminists through and through, Avni and Hirschhorn are committed to the idea of communal empowerment. Their album's liner notes actually reference the pages in Falk's book that contain the corresponding English/Hebrew texts; it's gratifying to find artists whose mission includes helping listeners learn and use

their melodies, not just passively receive them. The notated music for some of these melodies can also be found in "The Music of Linda Hirschhorn: More Hebrew Canons, Rounds and Musical Settings" [available from Tara Publications, 1-800-TARA-400, or [www.jewishmusic.com](http://www.jewishmusic.com)].

The Jewish-feminist prayers that Avni and Hirschhorn have chosen for this album include those for the Sabbath (many), the New Moon, food, all-purpose gratitude, peace, naming, falling asleep, and other moments of significant change in one's life that beg for sanctification. As always, Falk's texts bask in her signature restraint and ascetic lyricism.

Avni's Israeli folk-style voice and Hirschhorn's grounded, muscular one are supported by a flotilla of real musicians, not synthesizers, and this choice reflects the composers' spiritual intent.

"Fran and I were going for real sound," explains Hirschhorn, "with real musicians who are sweating and breathing and moving with the music. We wanted human imperfection and passion. Marcia's prayers have been such

an inspiration to me that I wanted to bring them to people at another level: from your head to chambers in your heart and body that you didn't even know you had, until you're moving, you're rhythm, the insides of your body start to feel the prayers, you're praying on different levels that you experience physically."

On this page, we offer, as a teaser, one very simple prayer set as a round. "Blessing Before the Meal [*Ha-Motzi-a*]." Instead of the male God who drills us to bark, "*Baruch Atah Adonai Elohainu Melech HaOlam* [Blessed are You, male God, Our Lord, King of the Universe]," the text's low-key inclusiveness readies us to receive a God whose presence we can feel leaning towards us, so that we actually listen. "Let us bless the source of life that brings forth bread from the earth." Really plain. The prayers create an emptiness that holds out for us the awe that is possible to feel when the clutter is gone. We become alive again to the holy ground on which we stand, and which we are. We remember that we

too, are lifegivers and soil. This round, of course, is the perfect vehicle for expressing implicitly feelings of collaborative wholes larger than their parts, and compelling cycles of renewal.

## BLESSING BEFORE THE MEAL

Round

Music: Linda Hirschhorn  
Text: Marcia Falk

1  
N' - va - réch n' - va - réch n' - va - réch et én ha - cha -

2  
yim n' - va - yim ha - mo - tsi - a le - chem min ha - a - rets -

3  
min ha - a - rets ha - mo - tsi min ha - a - rets

N'-va-réch et én ha-cha-yim  
Ha-mo-tsi-a le-chem min ha-a-rets

נִבְרַךְ אַתָּה יְיָ עֵין הַחַיִּים  
הַמּוֹצִיָאָה לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

Let us bless the source of life which brings forth bread from the earth.

*Hamotzia excerpted from The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival by Marcia Falk (HarperSan Francisco, 1996). Copyright © 1996 by Marcia Lee Falk. Used with permission. Copies of The Book of Blessings may be ordered through your local bookstore or from HarperCollins at 1-800-242-7737. To order the book and the CD, visit LILITH's website at [www.lilithmag.com](http://www.lilithmag.com)*

Left to Right:  
Linda Hirschhorn,  
Fran Avni and  
Marcia Falk.



the ways we are